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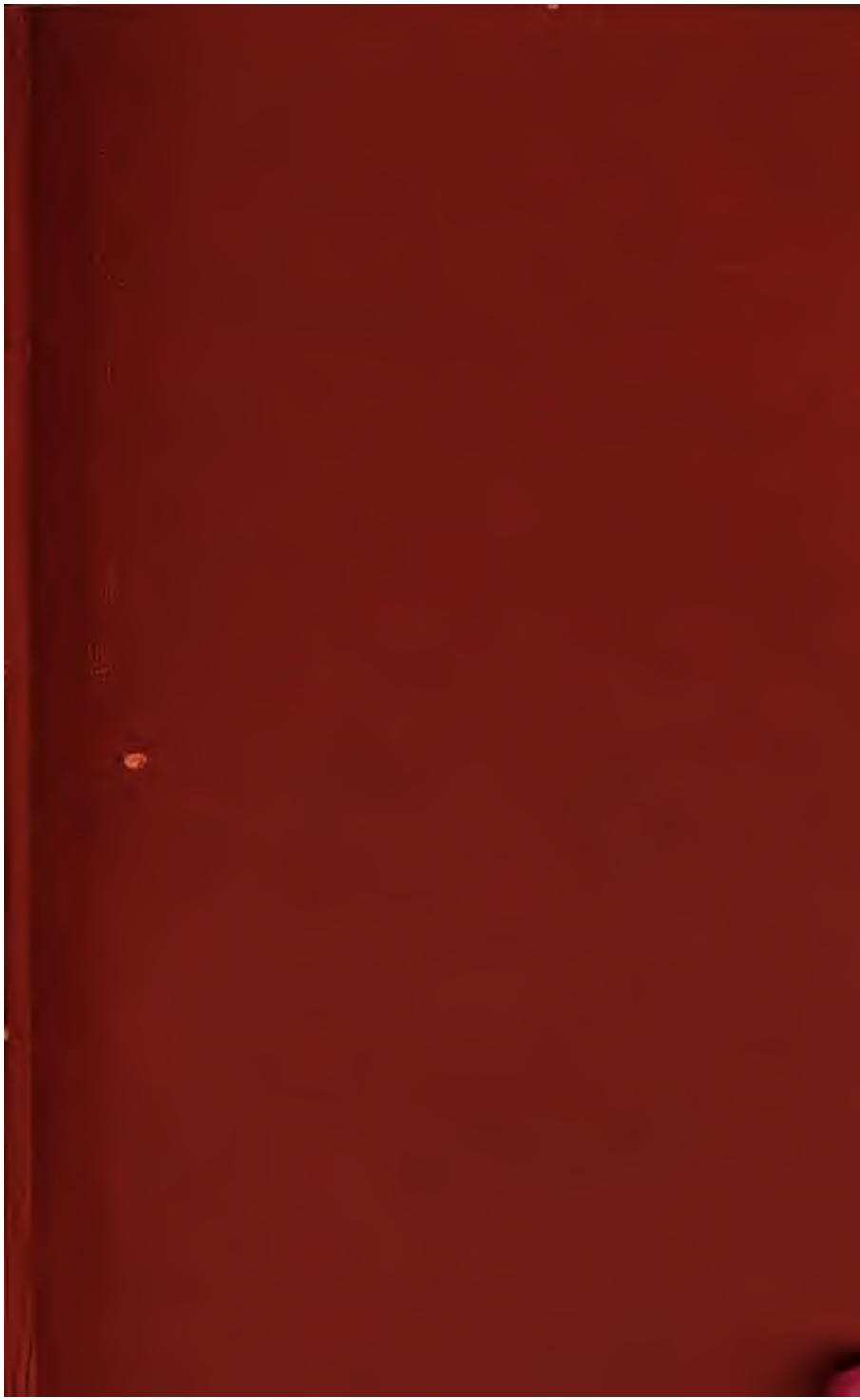

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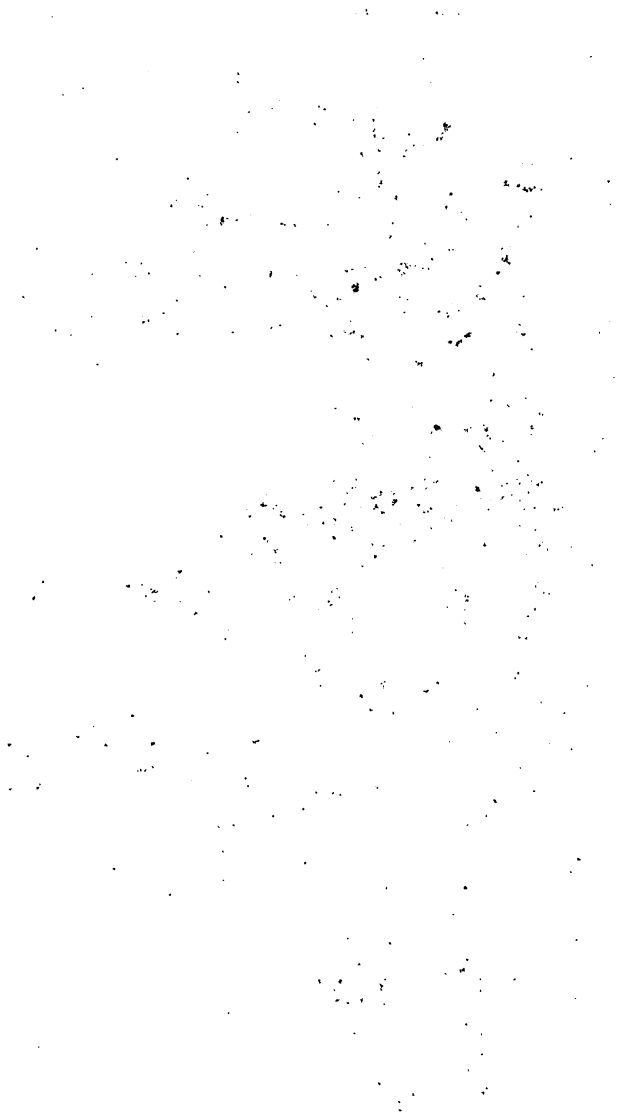

Where there's a Will there's a Way:

AN ASCENT

OF

MONT BLANC

BY A NEW ROUTE AND WITHOUT GUIDES.

BY

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ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

AND

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SECOND EDITION,

WITH TWO ASCENTS OF MONTE ROSA.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, & ROBERTS.
1856.


BIBLIOTHECA BOT

PREFACE.

THESE pages contain the narrative of an ascent of Mont Blanc, made in August, 1855, by a new route, and without guides. It has been thrown together by two or three members of the party from notes made at the time, and from recollection; it is therefore hoped that without examining with too critical an eye either the composition or the arrangement of the subject, the reader will regard the novelty of the undertaking, and its successful termination, as possessing some claims on his attention.

A small portion of the accompanying map has been filled in from that published by the Sardinian Government; it is, however, prin-

cipally taken from the survey which Professor Forbes made when in Chamouni, and which he has attached to his work on the Alps of Savoy. This compilation, although drawn from authentic sources, makes no pretensions to perfect accuracy, but is introduced in order to render the descriptive details more intelligible, and to point out to future travellers the general direction of the route to be pursued.

It may be mentioned that the guide represented in our engraving, smoking his pipe, is the well-known Ulrich Lauener of Lauterbrunnen.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

We are unwilling to place the following narrative of an ascent of Mont Blanc in the hands of the public unaccompanied by a brief reply to anticipated objections. Some of our friends have already asserted that this field of scientific research has been exhausted. They blame us for having risked our own lives in an enterprise without aim or purpose, and for now holding out to others any inducement to tread in our footsteps; and they jestingly intimate that we must be prepared to defend ourselves in the Criminal Court against a charge of manslaughter.

In attempting the ascent, we were simply actuated by love of adventure, by the hope of breaking through the exclusive Chamounix

system*, and by the desire of making ourselves familiar with the beauty and topography of the Alpine regions. We went abroad for recreation: it was pleasure that we sought; and we gave but little thought to useful discovery. True it is, that the pleasure was of a noble and an elevating character; true also, that when novel facts came in our way, they were not neglected; true, that when observations could be made with the instruments which we occasionally carried, they were recorded. Regarding, then, these mountain excursions as a temporary relief from arduous duties or indoor confinement, and contrasting them with other amusements pursued with the same end in view, what is the result? With regard to danger, at what conclusion do we arrive?

How many are there who, scarcely able either to pull or swim a stroke, attempt to manage a light racing craft, and pay the fatal

* See note at the end.

penalty of their fool-hardiness? Let Thames and Severn answer. How many are there who, hardly knowing the difference between a hack and a hunter, break a limb or lose their life in the ardour of the chase? Let Oxfordshire and Leicester tell the tale. How many are there who, ignorant of woodcraft, hasten forth in September and October, and become victims of carelessness and inexperience? Let the English woods and Scottish moors reply.

But who repeats in tones of sorrow the name of friend or relative that has perished amid the solitudes of the higher Alps? The Jung Frau's spotless snows, the crested summits of the Wetter-Hörner, Monte Rosa's craggy peaks, are all guiltless of the traveller's blood. These, and many other lofty pinnacles of Switzerland, have welcomed the adventurous mountaineer; and death or severe accident is unknown. The loss of three guides when Dr. Hamel made the ascent of Mont Blanc is almost the only instance; and this accident, together with perhaps one other,

were, it is more than probable, caused by the absence of sufficient precaution.

Such is the general view. Let us now say a few words relative to our own particular position. We all had perfect confidence in each other; we had had more than ordinary experience in mountain difficulties; we had all crossed glacier passes without guides; and we had made some of the more difficult ascents. We had erected a stone memorial upon the Petit Mont Cervin; we had scaled the Breit-Horn's icy ridge; and the majority of our party could say that they had climbed the eastern extremity of the Pennine chain, that they were the first and only explorers who had gained the very highest peak of its three-forked summit, that they had looked down upon the valleys beneath from Monte Rosa's Aller-höchste-Spitze. By examining maps and models, we had made ourselves as nearly masters of the route as possible; continued training had put us into capital condition, so that we could have sustained very

prolonged exertion; and we *knew* the nature of the difficulties to be overcome, and were consequently enabled to guard against danger. It was after this preparation that we started upon our enterprise; and we maintain that the risk of serious accident was but little greater than that incurred by the pedestrian in the streets of London.

It is almost unnecessary here to explain the spirit with which these remarks have been written; for, although apparently of a somewhat boastful character, surely not one of our readers would misconstrue our motive. We seek not to parade our excursions; but we enumerate some of them, first, with the view of justifying ourselves against those censors who, by accusing us of rashness, while they are themselves ignorant of the truth, fairly lay themselves open to a precisely similar charge; and, secondly, with the intention of warning all who would undertake these difficult excursions against engaging in them too hastily, lest they meet with serious accident.

What, then, is the motive that induces us to publish this account? Not the novelty of the subject; for Mont Blanc has been the theme of every form of volume recognised by the guild of publishers, of nearly every title that the ingenuity of a writer could suggest. We might instance the popular account of Albert Smith, the pleasing narrative of Ion's gifted author, and the scientific researches of the Scottish Forbes; or we might draw from their dusky shelves the more ponderous tomes of Humboldt, of De Saussure and of Schlagenweit.

Can we, then, hope to find a vacant space amid these serried ranks? May we add yet another drop to that mountain cup of knowledge, which is about to overflow? The knapsack of Alpine lore is closing; and can we venture to assert that they who pack it leave one small corner still unoccupied?

We do not attempt to trespass upon ground already trodden. We do not enter the field as competitors with those who regard these regions with the eye of an artist, of a philo-

sopher, or of a naturalist. But the ascent of this monarch of mountains gave us unbounded gratification; and this it is that we seek to place within the reach of all who like ourselves are inclined to say,

"Fain would I climb, but that I fear to *pay*."

Dare we then associate together some of nature's grandest scenes and degrading thoughts of sordid mammon? The mind recoils from the incongruity. That there is, however, but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, is an axiom, and one not limited to the British Isles; for when Mont Blanc's snow-clad summit first greets the youthful traveller, an irresistible impulse urges him to scale the glorious mountain and explore its hidden wonders; but ere his thoughts find utterance, there comes a cruel, killing frost, that blights his new-born hopes, and, for the shout of exultation just bursting from his lips, he whispers in faltering tones, "How much will be the cost?" or, "Will the governor pay?"

To the first of these questions, there has hitherto existed but one nearly stereotyped reply; for, as all the world knows, the expense of an ascent from Chamounix amounts to nearly thirty pounds for each traveller — an expense that cannot be avoided, and one that debars many an enthusiastic mountaineer from a great and glorious pleasure, a pleasure characterised by Professor Forbes as one beyond and without a name. If, however, the ascent be made from St. Gervais, the traveller is at liberty to select his own guides, to determine for himself the number that he requires, or, if so inclined, to dispense with them altogether; and in that case the expense would be about twenty shillings. We have ourselves found guides an encumbrance rather than an assistance, and in a long walk even the best would generally be distanced by most English mountaineers.

Two young men from Trinity College, Dublin, whom we afterwards met at Geneva last summer, followed our route; and the Chasseurs

who accompanied them were well pleased to receive eight pounds for their services. One of these gentlemen failed in consequence of illness; but the other easily reached the summit, and afterwards returned to St. Gervais.* If those who are contented with a limited number of guides are enabled to travel in his footsteps, or if some more daring cragsmen enter upon these vast glacier fields with no other companionship than that of their own bold spirits — if any such derive assistance from the following pages, then will the object with which they were penned have been accomplished.

Pluck and determination, though indispensable requisites, are, however, insufficient to ensure success. The party who make this attempt without guides, should consist of at least five members; they should be known to each other, and provided with proper implements; they should all be familiar with glaciers,

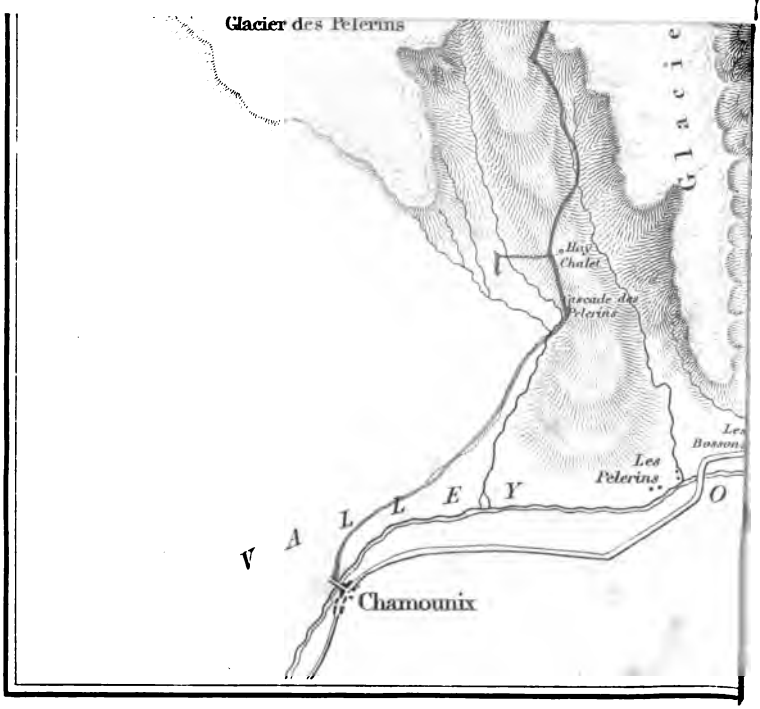
* See note at the end.

skilled in overcoming the obstacles which these present, and accustomed to rely upon their own resources in seasons of difficulty.

Yet with all these essentials at command, failure is by no means impossible. But let not the ardent lover of mountain adventure despair; let him bear his first repulse with patience, and boldly make another trial. We believe that all such spirits must be good fellows; and we heartily wish them a triumphant reward to their labours, whether the scene of these be laid in hill or in dale, in high places or in low, in England or in foreign climes; and in bringing these observations to a conclusion, we beg them to remember that

> "Our doubts are traitors,
> And make us lose the good we oft might win
> By fearing to attempt."

Caius College,
March, 1856.


Glacier des Pelerins
Glacie
Haut Chalet
Cascade des Pelerins
Les Pelerins
V A L L E Y
O
Chamounix

AN

ASCENT OF MONT BLANC.

After exploring the glaciers and passes in the neighbourhood of Monte Rosa and Mont Combin, we re-united our forces early in August 1855, at the head of the Val d'Aosta. In our social little band of mountaineers, the clerical body was represented by Charles Hudson, who took charge of our young friend George Joad, and by Grenville and Christopher Smyth; the architectural skill of Charles Ainslie was temporarily diverted from English schools and churches, to the rude cheese chalets of Piedmont and Savoy; while E. J. Stevenson and E. S. Kennedy, having torn themselves away from Alma Mater and the Caius boat, exchanged the Senate-house

for Italian skies, and the placid bosom of the Cam for the ice-fed torrents of the Dora and the Arveiron. Our steps now led us to Courmayeur; and there we heard that Mr. Ramsay of Christ Church, Oxford, had, in the company of six guides, ascended the Col du Géant, and that he had thence succeeded in gaining a point but an hour distant from the summit of Mont Blanc; we indulged, therefore, the hope of enjoying an ascent without being obliged to submit to the unreasonable demands that are made upon travellers at Chamounix. As the system established at that place in reference to guides may not be generally known, it should be mentioned that all persons residing at Chamounix, who are desirous of becoming guides, pass a certain examination, and then their names are enrolled. The traveller who wishes to make an excursion, must apply to the guide-chef, who supplies him with the number of guides determined upon by tariff, and in each case these guides must be taken in rotation as their names stand on the list. The evils attendant on this arrangement are twofold, first, as they relate to travellers, secondly, as they affect the guides themselves. No in-

ducement for exertion or self-improvement is held out to the guide who is desirous of distinguishing his name from that of his fellows, while, on the other hand, the traveller bent upon exploring the more difficult regions of this Alpine chain, is often compelled to accept as guides, men competent only to escort the dilettante tourist to the giddy heights of the Montan Vert, or to carry a lady's shawl to the dangerous pinnacle of the Flegère. It is not long since a friend of ours ascended Mont Blanc from Chamounix, with two other gentlemen, when six of their guides, to each of whom they were obliged to give 100 francs, had never been up the mountain; while upon another occasion, two or three of the number forced upon the travellers, were unable to proceed further than the Grand Plateau, and our friend reached the summit without receiving the assistance for which he had paid so high a sum. There are, however, at Chamounix fine sturdy fellows whose intrepidity and skill have justly been the theme of admiration, and it is upon those men that the arbitrary laws press with severity and injustice. Victor Tairraz, a guide, who has taught himself

English, and is a first-rate mountaineer, complains bitterly that he derives no advantage from his perseverance and superior education. At Chamounix he who is at home among the snow and glaciers, and he who is unable to pass the threshold of difficulty, are placed alike on the same level. In a country where the face of nature presents an irregularity at once so grand and so attractive, the folly or cupidity of man have attempted to establish the law of perfect equality.

There has been lately a destructive fire at Chamounix. A member of our party left a cheque for the sufferers, on condition that it should remain untouched until an English traveller should be at liberty to choose his own guide, and to determine for himself the number he required.

Upon making inquiries at Courmayeur, however, we found, to our surprise and disappointment, that two men had already gone thence to Chamounix in order to concert measures, that a corps de guides was in the course of formation, and that the answer to our question as to the sum they demanded was, "Le prix de Chamounix." This answer

we received from men who had never reached the summit, who had made no preparation for sleeping in the mountain at night, similar to the accommodation at the Grands Mulets; from men, too, most of whom had, in the ascent with Mr. Ramsay, given up from sheer want of pluck and determination. Upon a further acquaintance with these men, we found the general opinion verified in them, that the coward is a braggart and a bully. It is they who form the party of the guides. Upon the other hand, there are the chamois hunters, industrious men who gain a precarious livelihood by the chase, with several of whom we became acquainted through the kindness of Mr. Hamilton, an Irish gentleman at present residing with his family at Courmayeur. The following are the names of two employed by us: Pierre Mochet and Gratien Bareng. These hunters had accompanied Mr. Ramsay, and we mention their names in order that they may be sought out by travellers as men whom the guide-party wish to exclude, except upon their own terms, from employment, although in all necessary qualifications by far their superiors. The severe and ill-paid nature of

their occupation may be gathered from the fact that while we were there one of them brought home as the result of two days' continuous hunting a remarkably fine chamois, for which, including its skin, horns, &c., he only obtained fifteen francs.

With these chamois hunters we made a satisfactory arrangement to try the ascent of Mont Blanc; little time, however, had elapsed before one of them returned saying, with evident symptoms of regret, that they must decline. The guides had threatened them, and they knew the character of their countrymen too well not to be aware that if they accompanied us, their lives would be in danger. Mr. Hamilton, who has resided some years in Piedmont, did not hesitate to express his opinion that their fears were too well founded. Of course we could not think for one moment of urging them to accompany us under these circumstances: it was the first time such Italian feelings had been brought so closely home to us; we felt pity for the poor hunters, and sought to frustrate the manœuvre of the guides; while we determined that the position and character of each party should be made known to future English travellers.

Our excitement was now upon the increase: we had before us, not only the difficulty of surmounting the monarch of European mountains, but the petty opposition of a parcel of pitiful Italians had to be overcome. It was past nine at night, and all the preparations had to be made for an early start on the following morning. We were at this moment partaking of Mr. Hamilton's kind hospitality, who, with the ladies of his family, entered most warmly into the contest. His son, also, a young man strongly attached to mountain climbing, and evidently hand-in-hand with the chamois hunters, exerted himself strenuously in the cause; the guides were in hot debate at a neighbouring café, the chamois hunters were at a loss how to act, the whole town was on the *qui-vive*, and messengers were passing to and fro between the two parties. The demands of the guides became more outrageous: we were told that they insisted upon receiving 600 francs from each of the party, and required, also, to be furnished with provisions for two days. We asked the chamois hunters if they would undertake to obtain porters, who, with themselves, would

carry provisions and other necessaries to the place at which we proposed to sleep. They made the attempt, but the opposition of the guides was too formidable. At length they promised to obtain porters for a portion of this distance; but even the mere agreement to carry a traveller's luggage up a moderate height, without the consent of the self-constituted guide party, had the effect of again bringing before the hunters' mind visions of Italian rifle balls or stilettos. They, however, went out to make the necessary arrangements, and the guides, finding their threats were no longer effectual, had now recourse to bribes; and not only offered to pay them the sum we had agreed upon, but also promised to give them a dinner if they refused to accompany us; but the hunters said they had pledged their word, and we found to our satisfaction that they resisted both corruption and intimidation.

It was now getting late, and many were the preparations to be made before we dared seek our Italian couches. We knew that an early start on the morrow could be secured only by completing every arrangement over night, and

that it was quite out of the question to leave any portion of our arrangements to others. Each, therefore, took his share of the labour. While one presided at the pot, where innumerable eggs were boiling, and another superintended the packing of the sausages, the indefatigable Ainslie manufactured warm gloves out of a piece of cloth extracted from the stores of our hospitable entertainer; and ingeniously concocted a preparation of boiled bougies and olive oil, as an ointment to protect our faces from the sun. At length all was completed, and but little time left for the dreams of the morrow.

We left Courmayeur at 6.30 A.M. on Tuesday, Aug. 7th, regarded with interest by the inhabitants, and even by the guides (for we had so far gained the day), and encouraged by the good wishes of Mr. Hamilton and his family. We were, however, a little suspicious of our porters, seven in number, and therefore allowed them to precede us. They carried bread, meat, cheese, &c., together with our small tent brought from England by Grenville and Christopher Smyth, for photographic purposes, but occasionally

found useful in expeditions which, like the present, involved the necessity of passing a night in the mountains. The morning was very fine, and we rapidly ascended the precipitous steep which on this side leads to the "Col du Géant," reaching its summit about 12.30. Here we had some food at a height of 11,240 feet, and at a spot immediately adjoining the old cabin in which the energetic philosopher De Saussure, in the year 1788, spent seventeen days and nights pursuing scientific observations on the geology, natural history, and magnetism of the Higher Alps. A few stones alone mark the place of his encampment. His son, M. Theodore de Saussure, who accompanied him on that occasion, and shared his labours, the last survivor of all who joined in that expedition, is now dead. The sun's rays were powerful, and we obtained abundance of water by adopting the simple expedient of spreading snow upon faces of rocks that sloped towards the south, and placing cups to catch the drops as it melted. Not far from this spot are found numerous specimens of quartz crystals, and in the search for them we expended some time. At length, after a

halt of about an hour and a-half, and after having tried in vain to induce two of the porters to accompany us some distance further, we parted from all our attendants: then shouldering the knapsacks and placing the heavier portion of our impedimenta across poles, we commenced our glacier march. It was an exciting moment, for though disposed to underrate rather than to magnify the difficulties before us, we were yet fully aware that our expedition could not be successfully carried out except with constant care and perseverance. It was by no means a novelty for us to find ourselves alone upon the high glaciers; yet all anxiety could not be banished; for we were more than usually loaded, we had in view a couple of nights' bivouacking in unknown regions, and above all we were striving to scale the monarch himself.

On leaving the Col, the rope which we used on all occasions of difficulty was attached to belts fastened round our waists, and we advanced single file. Nor was this precaution unnecessary, for following the directions which the chasseurs had given us before their depar-

ture from the Col, we endeavoured to skirt the northern angle of the peak of red granite called from its shape La Tour Ronde, when C. Smyth, who was at that moment in the van, slipped up to his middle through a treacherous coating of drifted snow by which a deep crevasse running transversely to our line of march was concealed. Stevenson, who was the second in the line, by planting his alpenstock firmly in the snow, was able to keep the rope perfectly tight whilst the leader was quietly extricating himself from his awkward position. This crevasse, extending all across the glacier and too wide to pass by ordinary means, seemed a bar to further progress in this direction. A council of war was held; and then, retracing our steps for a short distance, we skirted the eastern base of the Flambeau, thus selecting a higher, and, as it seemed, a preferable route to that taken by Mr. Ramsay. We next descended upon the upper portion of the Glacier du Tacul, with the intention of again slightly ascending to a spot contiguous to the Aiguille du Midi, where we had been told we should find rock upon which we might encamp. But as evening drew on, the clouds collected, and

at the foot of the Rognon we called a halt. We had now been walking, heavily laden, for some hours, and for the greater part of the time ankle deep in snow. Thick mists were now around us; we therefore determined to bivouac where we were, upon the open glacier. We selected a spot partially sheltered by the Rognon from the wind, which in violent gusts was now threatening us with a rough night. We at once pitched our tent and strengthened it by ropes attached to poles which we drove into the snow. A large waterproof was stretched out upon the soft surface of the snow within. A quilt being laid upon this, we calculated upon passing, with the help of our blankets, a tolerably pleasant night of it. But the even soft snow makes after all but an indifferent couch. The warmth of the tent causes the snow beneath to bind and conform itself to the shape of the body. We had no means of procuring water for our remarkably weak grog but by suspending a saucepan filled with snow from the roof of our tent, under which we held in turns a small spirit-lamp, an exercise which required the greatest patience. Our wet boots, covered with snow, were suspended

from our tent roof. As our appetites were in no way impaired by a ten hours' walk, a considerable onslaught was made upon the provision stores. We then wrapped ourselves up as well as we could in our blankets, and coiled ourselves up for the night. Flap, flap, flap, went the sides of our canvass till we verily thought the next gust would carry off the tent, boots and all — and there we should be left in a pretty mess still disputing about the blankets. Difficult it is to sleep at any time when the mind is excited by past exertions or future hopes, but that difficulty is increased tenfold when our roof is the sky, our bed the snow, and when six men are crammed into a space adapted for three or four at the most. The time was enlivened by occasional conversations of this kind:—"Hollo, Stevenson, what are you at? don't pinch my legs!" "Then please, old fellow," would be the reply, "just have the goodness to take your foot off my face!"

Before daylight next morning we commenced preparations for breakfast, not however without having first cast many an anxious glance upon the prospect around. This was

not of an encouraging character: we were surrounded by masses of vapour, through which at distant intervals a solitary star appeared. Knowing, however, that such clouds might at that height be either the precursors of snow, or the harbingers of sunshine, we determined that if possible our past labour should not be entirely lost, and therefore proceeded upon our way. Our vision, except at rare intervals, was bounded at the distance of a few yards by the mists which rested upon the glacier-fields that we were now traversing. We scratched the surface with our poles to facilitate return, and roped ourselves together to avoid accident. The leading man steered by compass, and in this order we advanced across unknown tracts of perpetual snow. At the end of little more than an hour the mists began to disperse; we were rewarded by some magnificent glimpses of the high mountains, and we found to our satisfaction that we had steered to a spot not fifty yards distant from our destination. We were now placed immediately between the bases of the Aiguille du Midi, and the Mont Blanc du Tacul, overlooking the Glacier des Bossons.

We had now a rather stiff climb of three hours in order to ascend the snow-slope, the steepest part of which is near the top, and which by accurate measurement made with our clinometer we found inclined at an angle of 52 degrees. After passing, by means of a snow-bridge, a crevasse which crossed the slope at its steepest part, and in a longitudinal direction, our leading man proceeded a short distance further, and from the summit of Mont Blanc du Tacul he had a view of the Monts Maudits and of Mont Blanc. The summit of the Monts Maudits is divided into two peaks, and between these two, passes the route to Mont Blanc.

To the best of our judgment we were now within four hours of the object of our expedition, but in the meantime the wind had risen considerably, the clouds had again collected, from which fine snow was falling, and thick drifts of mist were driven rapidly past; we therefore, after some discussion, determined that further perseverance would be rash. We then rapidly retraced our steps to the sleeping quarters, where we stretched our limbs for an hour or two on

the waterproof, and then, having packed up our tent and the remaining provisions, we once more found ourselves homeward bound.

The march was exceedingly fatiguing, our burdens were cumbrous and weighty, the sun was beginning to exert considerable power, and at every step we sank nearly knee-deep in the softened snow. Some of our party considered this to be the most trying excursion which they had as yet attempted. On the previous day we had encountered more than ordinary fatigues, and now, after an indifferent night and an early and arduous mountain climb, the labour told so severely upon some who were extra-weighted, that they were frequently compelled to drop upon the snow, in order to regain their wonted energy. One comfort, however, was still remaining: we had carefully preserved our last bottle of vin rouge; a bottle of no mean quality, which, like the regimental colours that renew the spirits of the drooping, was now carried in the van. This was our promised reward, the grateful cordial that should impart fresh energy, the elixir that none dare taste until the glacier march were concluded, and the summit of the Col

du Géant attained. At length we are all in the wished-for haven, and grouped in close proximity to the ruins of old de Saussure's hut. A broad flat rock forms the table, in the centre of which conspicuously stands the solitary bottle. "Shall we open him at once, or shall we wait a little?" "No, don't open him yet, let us first have some food." Accordingly, the choice viands are produced that coldly furnish forth our mountain meal; the rude slab of primeval granite groans again with the superincumbent mass,—the bread and butter, the diminutive poulets, the savoury sausage. These trifles are, however, subjected to unmerited neglect; a far greater attraction is exercising its spell; all eyes are intensely gazing upon the central flagon; the extraction of the cork is impatiently awaited,—the *goût* and the flavour,—the rich, racy, red wine,—the ruby tide that shall course through the arteries of the heart,—all are in imagination anticipated. In the exuberance of his spirits, and in the intense excitement of the moment, a distinguished member of our band begins at this crisis to dance for very ecstasy; the bottle falls with a hideous

crash, and the promised land overflows with the juice of the grape. A dreadful pause ensues — it endures but a moment, for with eager haste we make little snow-balls, with which each of us mops up as much of the precious liquid as his ready-formed sponge will collect. After this, we rapidly descended the Col du Géant, and reached Courmayeur in the evening.

We have every reason to believe that had the weather been propitious our enterprise would have been successful; one failure, however, did not deter us from another attempt at the glorious old monarch, neither did it dispirit us; for it was to St. Gervais we had been looking as the point which offered the fairest prospect of success. The trial from Courmayeur was only a little diversion by the way, and several of us had looked forward to mounting again from St. Gervais, even had we been able to gain the summit from the south side of the chain.

We accordingly one fine morning continued our march along the Allée Blanche, a route well known to nearly all visitors of Chamounix, since it forms the most beautiful portion of

the celebrated Tour de Mont Blanc. Among the many possible routes that we had discussed, as likely to lead to the summit, is one that, after starting from Courmayeur, would turn off northwards at the extremity of the Glacier de Miage, where its enormous terminal moraine, 800 feet in height, blocks up the valley of the Allée Blanche, and forms the Lac de Combal. Pierre Mochet told us that the route had been taken, though he thinks only once, from this point up the Glacier de Miage, over the Col, and down upon the other side to Contamines; but it is impossible to say whether Mont Blanc be accessible from the top of the Col. The path did not appear to be quite impracticable, so far as we could form an opinion, when afterwards looking down upon it, from the summit; perhaps, however, before long the question will be settled by some adventurous mountaineer.

We continued leisurely onwards by the Col de la Seigne and Les Motets, so that it was nearly dusk on the evening of Friday, August 10th, when our party separated at the little inn of Nant Bourant, which lies between the Col du Bonhomme and Conta-

mines. Ainslie and Kennedy slept there, and undertook to bring forward the tent in the morning. The rest of the party went forward to Contamines, partly to secure better quarters, and also to allow more time at St. Gervais, to make preparations for a start on the following Monday morning.

About nine o'clock in the morning we were under weigh, in light marching order; for we had engaged a man to carry our knapsacks to the Hotel du Mt. Joli, St. Gervais. A walk of forty-five minutes brought us to a point on the road opposite the village La Vilette, the abode of several chamois hunters, with whom Hudson had made expeditions in the months of March and April, 1853. The occupation of the inhabitants of La Vilette deserves, perhaps, a passing notice. Upon the side of the higher mountains are situated numerous pastures, which are strictly called Alpes, and these serve during the short summer as feeding grounds for innumerable herds of cattle. Those who attend upon these cows pass a wild and barbarous life amid the mountains for three or four months of the year, during which time they rarely smoke, and never taste

bread, meat, beer, or wine, but subsist entirely upon the various concoctions through which the milk passes in its transformation into cheese. This mode of living might give rise to a question for the physiologists. They inhabit rude chalets or "Seen-hütte," in which the explorer of the higher mountains frequently finds a friendly welcome, an acceptable bowl of cream, and a *lively* and disagreeable couch. The effect produced by the interior of one of these hovels, after the arrival at the close of day of three or four Alpine tourists, is worthy of the pencil of a Rembrandt. The huts generally lean against a natural slope of the mountain's side, and are built up of loose masses of rock with smaller pieces in the crevices. From wall to wall are stretched rough pine-wood logs, and on these are laid flat stones that serve as a substitute for slate roofing. From a moveable beam near one of the corners of the inner apartment a huge cauldron of seething milk is suspended over a wood-fire, whence in the deepening shades of evening there flickers an uncertain gleam. At a convenient distance has been raised a rude pile of stones supporting the large bowl of hot

milk in which are soaking pieces of bread, that, as an unwonted luxury, have been contributed to the evening meal, from the stores of the newly arrived guests. They are themselves seated on low stools, each with a central solitary leg, and while eagerly dipping their long wooden ladles into the simple brew, they satisfy the cravings of a mountain appetite. The uncouth figures of the herdsmen, negligently thrown into picturesque attitudes, or stalking like Macbeth's witches about the cauldron, complete the picture.

The life led by these people in desolate spots many miles away from any human habitation, though passed amidst the grandest scenery of the Alps, appears to be particularly wretched: they rarely, if ever, change their dress, and as for washing, it is not thought of except on those frequent occasions when by dipping their hands in the seething curds, they contrive to impart to the incipient cheese the racy Gruyère flavour. After their summer sojourn in these remote and rarely visited altitudes, they descend to the lower villages, where they pass the winter months in carving wood, and in other in-door occupations. La

Vilette is a village especially inhabited by this class of Swiss peasantry.

One of the chasseurs to whose dwelling we directed our steps, at once fell in with our plans, and promised to engage as many porters at five francs each as we desired. He asked twenty-five francs each for the services of himself and Cuidet; and to these two men we afterwards added a third on the same terms. The porters were to carry our food and blankets to the foot of the Aiguille du Gouté, and return the same day. The three chasseurs were to sleep with us at the foot of the Aiguille, and accompany us the second day to the summit of the Dome du Gouté. Mollard appeared greatly to prefer this arrangement, to receiving fifty francs on condition of accompanying us to the summit of Mont Blanc; and the reason he gave was, that the fatigue of ascending was so great that he would require two or three days' rest before returning to his ordinary pursuits. This arrangement coincided with our wishes; for, in the first place, it enabled us to take sufficient wraps and condiments to pass a pleasant night in the little cabin at the foot of the Aiguille,

and freed us from the necessity of carrying anything on our own backs to the summit of the Dome; and, in the second place, it left us free to persevere on our own responsibility in climbing the highest peak, as long as we thought proper.

The attainment of our wishes appeared now to be nearer than ever; but by a not unusual peculiarity of the mind, our thoughts reverted to former excursions, and to first impressions. Those produced by that remarkable succession of contrasts which is met with at every step, probably take the strongest hold of the traveller's imagination; he may perhaps dine at a well-appointed table d'hôte, in a large and showy salle à manger, and attended by a number of assiduous waiters, and a few hours afterwards sup on the coarsest fare, and seek repose in a wretched mountain hovel, but too well-pleased if no other companions save the rude cowherds of the Alps share his dormitory. Such is the variety in the artificial life of man: nature is, however, no less prodigal in the contrasts which she affords. As the pedestrian leisurely strolls up one of the Southern valleys, and finds himself surrounded by verdure, his

attention is suddenly attracted by a conspicuous object that appears close at hand, and intermingled with the wooded slopes about the bases of which he is wandering. The bosky dells and gurgling brooks of England, beauteous gifts of nature, are not absent; but the traveller gazes with peculiar pleasure upon this additional feature in the landscape, upon this dazzling mass of unsullied whiteness, which appears but a mile distant, and contrasts so remarkably with the dark foliage of the walnut and the sycamore, of which it appears in some mysterious manner to form a portion, while it is in truth a snow-capped mountain peak, that after perhaps some twenty hours' walking is still unattained.

The traveller continues upwards through the valley, and soon leaving the bright precincts of the cheerful day, he climbs the mountain side, amid the deep shadows of the pine wood gloom; while his eye, seeking in vain to pierce beyond, can distinguish nothing save gnarled and knotted stems, as they endlessly succeed one another. Thus he toils along a stony path, through some two thousand feet of height, and passing the highest but leafless pioneers of

the wood — trunks scathed by the lightning and shattered by the blast, — withered and sapless bolls, around which clings the rusty and hirsute foliage of the Alpine Rose * as a connecting link to unite them with its purple blossoms, — he emerges from the forests' dark recesses, rewarded by brilliant sunshine and by a prospect extending many miles over hills, and dales, and lakes, and woods, and rivers, while he treads upon a carpet of short turf, over which the Flora of the mountain has profusely scattered her choicest treasures.

Leaving now a region thus enamelled with brilliant and variegated colouring, the explorer of the Alps reaches the glacier's edge, and as he slowly climbs along the rugged barriers that restrain its icy stream, he has time to examine the moss and lichens with which the rocks are clothed. At length the cragsman descends upon the glacier: the sun is now high in heaven, and the surface of the ice is intersected by ten thousand rills hastening to swell the torrent that he had crossed in the early morning. He still approaches the sum-

* Rhododendron ferrugineum and R. hirsutum.

mit, forcing his way with difficulty amid huge and fantastic pinnacles of ice, and beholds the lower mountains sinking their crests far beneath him: but he has now wandered upwards many miles, the hours of evening are approaching, the peculiar chill of the glacier air exercises its subduing influence, and the running rills grow silent; the sluggish vapours of the valley wreathe slowly over the deep distant village, and there remains no token to tell of its existence, except the church-bell tones that are just perceptible even at these great heights and are straightway lost again. The rosy tints shed by the sun's departing rays, unaffected by the rugged character of their path, travel upwards without a check, and as if loth to break the last remaining ties that connect the light of day with the inhabitants of earth, they linger awhile upon the highest peaks, and, suddenly vanishing, leave the adventurous explorer to the solitude of the mountain. Yet they not so much teach him his own insignificance as they urge him onward towards the fulfilment of that yet higher destiny to which he has been called, by telling him that even

here all these beauties were created for his enjoyment.

Such are the contrasts that so powerfully impress the observant Swiss traveller: but there was an additional one that could be witnessed only in a party constituted like our own, for, as the reader will remember, three of its members were in holy orders. It was now Sunday morning: we invited the neighbouring visitors to attend our church services; the blinds of our little inn were drawn down, the clergymen were in suitable dress, and our small congregation joined in the services of the day, and listened to a sermon from one of our party. Within a few short hours how great the contrast; for, early the following morning, we were all in rough mountain costume, and none more roughly clad, or more active in scaling our glorious mountain, than he who in his clerical costume had but just previously given us the lessons of the preacher.

In the course of the day we saw Mollard for a few minutes, when he came down to the village of St. Gervais, to hear the discourse delivered by a Protestant Pasteur, who comes from Geneva every fortnight to preach to those of the

Roman Catholic population who are willing to hear him.

Early on Monday, the 13th, Hudson, Ainslie, and Kennedy were astir in order to make blanket-sacks, in which they might sleep: for Smyth's tent would not hold all, and it would be necessary for the rest to repose on the most comfortable rock that could be found in the neighbourhood of the encampment. Eventually, however, the hut proved large enough, so that some of us enjoyed the full benefit of our sacks, and shared also in the general stock of blankets. Hudson, acting, in February, 1853, upon the suggestion of Mr. G. F. Young, proved the utility of a sack, for by its aid he then slept comfortably between the Col d'Arterre and the Brevent, although at a height of 7000 ft. and with a temperature of 13° below zero of Fahrenheit.

Mollard and his five porters appeared at the appointed time; and we could not help being struck with their gaiety and cheerfulness of demeanour as contrasted with the churlishness of the porters at Courmayeur. The clouds began to collect after seven o'clock in the morning, but as the wind was from the dry

quarter, we were pretty sanguine of having tolerable weather.

As is invariably the case, much time was occupied in getting our things together, in packing them, and in apportioning them to the different porters. It was about nine o'clock when the party sallied forth from the charming little Hotel du Mont Joli, with the good wishes of our excellent landlord, Monsieur Rosset, who, both on our account and for his own sake, was very desirous we should succeed. From the balcony also many handkerchiefs waved a kind adieu. After walking up the valley for fifty minutes we reached the village of Bionay, and here we halted to buy a sack of charcoal and to borrow a thick blanket at the little inn. We now left the high road, which leads towards the Col du Bonhomme, and ascended a footpath to the left, which leads over the Col de Voza to Chamounix. In a quarter of an hour we fell in with Cuidet and Hoste, the other chasseurs, and our sixth porter, "Le Pauvre Joseph," as he is called in his native valley. He is a half-witted man, with a head sadly disproportioned to the diminutive size

of his body; laden as he was with a large bundle of straw tied up in blankets, for a shake-down on the rocks of the Aiguille du Gouté, he looked for all the world like a gigantic mushroom.

Fifty minutes above Bionay is the village of Bionassay, where we got three more blankets, and then the party proceeded to the highest chalet which lies on the slopes of the Mont Lacha. At this spot, which is perhaps forty minutes above Bionassay, we halted to have some bread-and-milk and cheese. We also engaged the owner to carry two cans of milk to our sleeping place.

From this chalet we descended a little into the valley along which flows the Glacier de Bionassay, and proceeding along the right bank of this glacier, we skirted on our left the rocky base of the picturesque Aiguille de Bellevue, and shortly afterwards turning abruptly to the left, we mounted towards the Pierre Ronde. The origin of this latter name, which is given to a part of the slope between the glacier and the Tête Rouge, is involved in obscurity.

There is no path whatever from the glacier

upwards, and consequently our party of sixteen became gradually broken up into threes and fours as we ascended this rocky incline.

Near this place an accident befel the sole remaining barometer, being the one that belonged to Ainslie. He had never before this morning entrusted it to any guide or porter; but he thought it would surely be safe on the back of one of the chasseurs, so long as the path continued good. Unfortunately the man to whom it was consigned turned it upside down, and carried it some distance in this position; in consequence of which a considerable quantity of mercury escaped, and rendered the instrument, for the time, quite useless.

Having passed the Pierre Ronde, we began to ascend towards the Tête Rouge; and now we had occasional glimpses, through the mist, of the magnificent Aiguille du Bionassay, which rose very abruptly on our right. This Aiguille is well seen from several points of the road between the Bonhomme and St. Gervais. Whether it be accessible or not has not yet been determined: but if it be, the Col du Miage must be the line of march.

Although few of our porters carried more than twenty pounds, the steepness and length of the climb was beginning to tell, and we had to pull up for them very frequently. We once thought of pitching the tent near the summit of the Aiguille du Gouté, but about this time it became evident, both from the unsettled state of the weather and the lateness of the hour, that we could not comfortably gain so great an elevation. Not far from the termination of this our first day's march, we inspected with feelings of interest the cabin which some seventy years since sheltered De Saussure when he sought to ascend Mont Blanc by the same route which we were now pursuing. Had the professor relied upon his own determination this attempt might have been crowned with success; he however sent Pierre Balmat in advance, who, upon his return, stated that the snow was in a treacherous state, and the enterprise was in consequence relinquished.

The mists were now greatly on the increase, and therefore as soon as we were fairly on the backbone of the Tête Rouge, we halted until the rest of the party, eleven in number, came

up. Several ptarmigan, or Albins, as they are called by the peasants, wheeled past at this time, and alighted within a short distance of us. These birds are easily shot, as they are not timid, and their flights are generally short. We remained stationary amongst the boulders, which were scattered in endless confusion around, until at last we were made aware of the approach of our friends the chasseurs, by the tapping of their iron spikes against the stones; and presently their figures and those of the porters loomed through the gloom. For some time we climbed the arrête in silence, and kept pretty well together, but at the end of half an hour there were again stragglers; and it seemed best to halt at once, and not allow them to fall too much into the rear. Most of the baggage-bearers came in sight in a couple of minutes, when it appeared that there were still some defaulters, and considerably beneath, "Le Pauvre Joseph" was seen, laboriously toiling up the steep and broken ascent under his not very tremendous load.

When Joseph had got up to the rest of the party, who waited for him, and had changed

his mushroom excrescence for a somewhat lighter burden, we once more sped forwards, and in half an hour had gained the two cabins which had been built the one in 1853, the other in 1854. These rude and roofless huts serve occasionally as a refuge for a benighted chamois hunter; they are about 10,000 feet above the sea, or rather lower than the cabin at the Grands Mulets.

There is a spring of excellent water, which forces its way through the snow not thirty yards distant: this is the highest source we ever met with, and it is a luxury not enjoyed by our friends at the Grands Mulets.

Our first care was to place the blankets and knapsacks in a dry place, and cover them with the tent in order to preserve them from the small particles of snow which were now falling; and then we turned to the weather-beaten tenements which were to afford us shelter for the night. It was now about five o'clock, and much was yet to be done before we could turn in for the night: there was therefore no time to be lost. Some of the party were in favour of the huts, and others disposed to abandon them, and pitch the tent

in a sheltered nook somewhat lower down the rocks. As the remaining hours of daylight were too few to allow of much discussion as to the relative merits of these two positions, and as we could not afford to divide our forces, it was put to the vote. The voices in favour of the huts were the more numerous; and when this point was decided there was no further difficulty, but all of us now set to work with a hearty good will; at the same time the porters put their hands in their pockets and looked cold, while the three chamois hunters gave us little or no assistance.

Ainslie had now an opportunity of displaying his skill as a pupil of Sir Charles Barry, and without loss of time he commenced his professional examination of the shattered walls, and gave directions as to what description of stones and slates should be collected. There was other work to be done; the floor was thickly coated with ice, and this again sustained a heavy covering of snow.

Our *haches* or ice axes quickly cut this snow to pieces, and we then threw the morsels over the

wall which was flush with the precipice. The ice required more labour, but this likewise was in a short time disposed of in a similar way. Our next domestic labour was to lay a flooring of thin slates, and upon this we spread the straw. About this time our architect pronounced the wall in a fit state to receive the roof, and we accordingly laid the waterproof tent over rough fir poles; which had been brought up from the valley the previous year; our alpenstocks and the poles of our tent being also put into requisition for the same purpose. Taking a hint too from the construction of the Swiss chalets, our architect directed his men to lay heavy stones when practicable upon our roof — a method of construction rendered necessary by the sudden gusts of wind which threatened every moment to carry away our light waterproof. We unpacked our stores and stowed them away in safe and accessible corners, chiefly behind Grenville Smyth, who undertook on this as well as on a former occasion the commissariat department.

At about 6 P.M. the porters had wished us good night, and success, and departed down

the mountain. Just before their departure the clouds, which apparently did not extend to a very considerable height above us, suddenly dropped, and thus caused one of those instantaneous and glorious transitions not unfrequent among the Alps. One minute we were in mid-winter working hard to keep ourselves warm, and the next, all was bright and clear overhead; while directly before us, the Aiguille du Gouté, the commencement of the morrow's climb, reared her steep sides, covered with narrow glaciers; whilst on our right was the noble Aiguille de Bionassay, covered on the north side with snow of unsullied purity, but of most appalling steepness.

This splendid sight cheered us all, and restored the most desponding; it was but transient, however, for, ere many seconds had elapsed, we were once more enveloped in clouds and exposed to a slight fall of snow. To return to creature comforts: we increased the size of our house, by adding a wing, in the shape of a large woollen cloth, hung from the wall, over the door, and resting on poles placed in a slanting position. In this, our outer chamber, Mollard kindled a fire of

charcoal and kept it burning all night. As it was now getting dark, we lighted one of the bougies, and prepared for our evening meal, for which our walk and masonic operations had given us a good appetite. Cold mutton, and bread and butter formed the staple of our repast. We cut up a roll of chocolate, and this boiled with milk and sugar formed a very refreshing beverage. Those who had been provident encased their lower extremities in sacks; others wrapped themselves in blankets, and all arranging themselves so as to afford to one another the greatest facility for moving their legs, sought to snatch a few hours' sleep. New quarters, especially when they are of so novel a character as these, close packing, the prospect of being called two hours before daylight, doubts about the weather; these, and many other sources of disturbance, combined to drive away, at least for a time, sweet repose. In our case it was only for a short time, for all the party enjoyed more or less sound sleep, and awoke greatly refreshed by it. During the night, we heard the roar of numerous avalanches; and the wind, which during the early part of the night

came in gusts, threatened to remove the only shelter which we had overhead.

August 14th, Mollard, according to our injunctions, woke the camp at two precisely; and we were delighted to find that it was a still calm morning, with a bright star-lit sky. The breakfast operations were commenced forthwith, but they took a considerable time before they were brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Ainslie cut up a cake of chocolate, whilst Hudson and his young friend George Joad, who were close to one another, beat up eggs, flour, and milk, for a hasty-pudding. Hudson was next to the door of our mansion, and thus the nearest one to the fire; consequently the cooking devolved upon him; Mollard assisted him in this; he however contributed more especially to the success of our operations, by using his mouth and throat as a pair of bellows, — an operation which was chiefly left to him, as it seemed but a poor preparation for a long day's climb. Being unversed in the culinary art, the *chef de cuisine* was ignorant of the proportions of the various ingredients required to give the proper consistence to the whole; for-

tunately, however, he had not to do with fastidious epicures just sitting down to dinner at Richmond or Blackwall, and the mixture was voted *nem. con.* worthy of the immortal Soyer. Ainslie's brew of chocolate was likewise very acceptable to us all, as we drank it from tins handed round the circle. When the large dish of hasty-pudding was put in the midst of the party, and spoons duly distributed, we were sorry to see that only six dipped into it, whereas our party consisted of seven. Stevenson, who on the previous day had energetically brought his axe to bear upon the hard ice of the hut, and had shown no signs of flagging, now felt ill, and unable to proceed; and was unwilling to delay the rest of the party by starting with them. He could neither eat nor drink anything at this our morning meal; and that is always a bad symptom; for so long as a man can eat and sleep well, there is little danger of his undertaking too much.

The temperature was about freezing point, or somewhat lower towards morning, but we were not at all inconvenienced by it, so well had the sacks done their duty.

The chamois hunters breakfasted on bread and butter and a little mutton, which they washed down with *vin rouge:* they then said they were ready for the start whenever we liked. Every one now looked out for his boots or shoes, and found them pretty dry and comfortable, as we had not been obliged, on the previous evening, to traverse much soft snow. Mons. Rosset, our landlord at St. Gervais, had put us up a parcel of raisins, which, as well as figs, are very palatable and refreshing during high mountain ascents, and these were divided amongst the party. This done, the signal for a start was given, and exactly at 4 A.M. we set out in high spirits, in consequence of the bright morning, which augured well for success.

How different was the scene now from that presented by the gloomy mists of the last afternoon and evening. Then all was dreary, cold, and desolate; now all the beauties and wonders of these lofty mountains and glaciers were displayed to view, as they lay in calm repose during the hour which immediately preceded sunrise.

Having made a dozen steps from our hut,

we were upon the snow, which was tolerably level for a short distance, and over which our route lay, as we kept slightly to our left, in order to avoid the fearfully steep slopes which led down to the glacier de Bionassay on the right.

It may be as well, before we advance further, to describe the nature and appearance of this Aiguille du Gouté, up the northern face of which we had to climb; and as Hudson made many expeditions on this mountain in his attempt to gain the summit of Mont Blanc, it may be as well to let him speak for himself: —

"From a casual observation made by David Couttet of Chamounix, in February, 1853, I was convinced that Mont Blanc could be mounted from St. Gervais, and accordingly, in the following month, a small party of us went from Geneva to make inquiries on the spot. Arrived in the valley, we were told that in previous years some few peasants had gained the highest point of the monarch, and that others had ascended to different points, by way of the Aiguille du Gouté. When, however,

we spoke of making an attempt, at once the idea was pooh-poohed, as impossible.

"But difficulties, when not insuperable, frequently add zest to the pursuit: in the present instance, therefore, it was with redoubled energy that I at once set about finding chamois hunters and others willing to make a start. With the exception, however, of M. Rosset, our worthy host, I could not meet with a single individual who would admit that it was possible, at this season of the year, to gain either the summit, or even the base, of the Aiguille, to say nothing of Mont Blanc itself.

"The most enterprising said they were willing to start with me whenever the weather was fine, though they had little expectation of succeeding: how little I neither knew nor could fully realise, until it was at last forced upon me by bitter experience.

"During the month of March, we made repeated attempts to gain the foot of the Aiguille, but were in every instance driven back by the unsettled state of the weather: at last, however, I made an entire change in the elements of the body of peasants who accompanied me, and gave directions to Mollard, one

of my new allies, to be at the Hotel du Mont Joli, St. Gervais, at 9 P.M. March 30th, 1853.

"I had retired early to bed, and it was not until the appointed hour that I was awakened by the tidings that my companion was below.

"The sky was not free from clouds, but on the whole the weather seemed not unfavourable.

"Mollard had tea with me, and at 10 P.M. we sallied forth, passed the village of Bionay, and then mounted the steep path to Bionassay, where, finding Cuidet and a third chamois hunter, we had some bread and milk. We here put on our high gaiters, for the snow extended even below this hamlet; and having set forth soon after midnight, were at once upon the hard frozen snow, which crackled under our feet. We skirted in the dark the right bank of the Glacier of Bionassay, mounted the steep snow-clad slopes of the Pierre Ronde and the Tête Rouge, and shortly after sunrise came to a point where we had our first view of the glorious old Aiguille du Gouté: so near indeed was it, that a quarter of an hour's further march over tolerably level snow brought us to its foot, and there we halted.

"Having suspended my barometer to the head of my hache, the handle of which was stuck into the snow, I prepared to reconnoitre the steep rocks and glaciers before me.

"When viewed from the bridge of St. Martin or Sallenches, the sides of the Aiguille appear so steep as to be quite impracticable for the foot of man; and, were it not for previous experience, and an eye accustomed to such scenes, we should at the present moment have been inclined to fancy that an insuperable barrier of 3,500 feet rose before us.

"Indeed the remarks passing between the hunters seemed to indicate that some such fears were already floating in their minds: for Cuidet observed to Mollard, '*Je vous donnerai cinq cent francs si vous montez là haut aujourd' hui.*' The brave replied, though in doubting accents, '*J'ai bonne espérance.*"

"Since these and similar signs made it appear probable that there would be deserters from our little band as it pushed forward, it seemed advisable that my observations as to the route should be complete, and quite independent of any one else.

"For a height of more than 3,000 feet this,

the northern face of the Aiguille, is for the greater part concealed by steep and narrow glaciers which flow from above, and are separated from one another by long and continuous lines of rocks, which protrude through the snow and ice, to the height of from ten to sixty feet.

"At this season of the year, when most of the winter's snows remained, the base of these rocks was so completely concealed that it was no longer possible, as in summer, to find a passage over the débris which skirts each side of the narrow ice-streams, but we were compelled to mount by passing over the crests of the huge blocks that formed the line.

"Having carefully treasured Mollard's observations respecting the route usually followed by those who had ascended this mountain, and having attentively considered the various obstacles likely to be encountered, I marked out with the eye that line of march which on the whole seemed most favourable. The altitude of the mercury was noted, the barometer restored to its resting-place on my back, and then once more en route. It may be well to observe that the weather at this hour seemed to

forbid all hope of gaining the highest peak of Mont Blanc; but I was very glad to have an opportunity of personally testing the practicability of overcoming the difficulties of the Aiguille at this hitherto untried season; the more so, as it was universally admitted that the obstacles between the summit of the Aiguille and that of Mont Blanc were secondary to those likely to be met with in the ascent of the former.

"With the assistance of an ice-axe, a short slippery steep was passed, the rocks were gained, and the climb fairly commenced, when lo! shouts are heard behind. What is there that still requires discussion? what new doubt has arisen? Listen: '*Monsieur, Monsieur, arrêtez-vous, c'est impossible s'avancer plus loin, il y a trop de vent, — regardez la neige; et le brouillard!*' Here was a nice kettle of fish, a gratifying announcement for a young mountaineer, a touching exposition of 'Hobson's choice,' — 'If you wish for our company, you must come with us down the mountain!'

"There was only one course open; consultation would have been useless, for the determination of each party was equally fixed.

"Having announced my intention of proceeding alone if they were unwilling to accompany me, and finding that they stood their ground without offering to advance, I turned about once more, and began the ascent. The wind was blowing in slight gusts, and small quantities of fine snow fell at rare intervals, or were swept from the rocks as the breeze passed over.

"The line of rocks which afforded footing for the first half mile, now terminated abruptly in the steep glacier, and it was necessary to traverse the snow field on the right in order to gain a second line which continued unbroken to the culminating point of the Aiguille. Of the difference existing between a near and distant view of Alpine objects, an ample illustration was now afforded, for these rocks, which from below had appeared uniform and but slightly raised above the surrounding glacier, now in reality raised themselves in vast angular blocks which were heaped one upon another to the height of fifty or sixty feet.

"On both sides of this huge rocky wall were the narrow glaciers already alluded to: so steep were they, that had a false step precipitated

the explorer upon them, he must have been hurried along until dashed over the precipices below.

"This was by no means a perilous position, for the footing was secure, the blocks were for the most part immoveable, and constant opportunities were afforded for a firm grasp with the hands.

" Most of the muscles were now called into play, for my passage was occasionally barred by a vertical wall of from four to eight feet; and unless it appeared more easy to double it, I was compelled to throw my ice-axe aloft, put my hands on the top, and draw myself up in the way that would have been sanctioned by a professor of gymnastics.

" My progress was watched by the three chamois hunters, who remained stationary on the snow, and whose persons, now reduced to specks by the intervening distance, were occasionally hid from view by the clouds driven below by the wind.

" He who from the deck of the tempest-tost ship would revel in the approach of the angry foaming billows,—he who would rejoice with a thrilling pleasure in the proximity of the re-

sistless thundering avalanche,—or he who on the rugged mountain, and while the lightning played about him, would feel an additional flow of spirits in battling with the furious elements;—this man, and perhaps he alone, could fully sympathise in the feelings of delight with which I now contemplated the scene around. The wild grandeur of the mountains, the rays of sunshine which at rare intervals forced their way through the obstructing frowning clouds, and the glorious combination of rock ice and snow, formed a picture so sublime, as must have charmed all true lovers of nature, even though some perhaps might prefer to view it under different circumstances.

"Although no halt had occurred, still an hour and a half had elapsed before I found myself within ten or fifteen minutes of the summit of the Aiguille.

"From this position the eye could easily and distinctly trace a route over and amongst the rocks which composed the remainder of the ascent: my present object, therefore, was gained, for it was now certain that no portion of the Aiguille du Gouté offered an insuperable barrier to him who would climb Mont

Blanc, even before the winter's snows had begun to disappear.

"Having observed and noted the barometer at this altitude, eaten a lump of sugar on which were sprinkled a few drops of æther, and cast one more longing look at the still untrodden summit, I prepared to descend; but so rough and broken was the course, that an hour and a half had elapsed before the party was reunited.

"In order to avoid accidents, it was desirable, in many parts of the descent, to make sure of each step, and sometimes it was necessary to sit over the edge of a rock, throw down the ice-axe, and lower myself down by means of my arms.

"The clouds cleared away from this part of the mountain, and therefore rendered useless the precautions previously taken to make the point at which one line of rocks was to be left and the other gained. During the following month of April, we twice arrived at a similar elevation on the Aiguille, and on one of these occasions, the weather was beautiful: it was a day on which the deep azure sky was unobscured by a single cloud; not a sound fell upon

the listening ear, and all nature seemed hushed in a repose so calm and deep as if never to be broken. All this was, however, insufficient at the time to deter my two guide-companions from refusing to advance, and making a retrograde movement, though one of them did afterwards say, 'The reason why we turned back when near the summit of the Aiguille was that my companion was afraid, and he made me timid; though had I had another comrade, we should have got up Mont Blanc all right.' After these repeated attempts, it was with no small degree of satisfaction, that I now found myself in company with a few tried Englishmen, once more about to scale the sides of my old friend the Aiguille."

After twenty minutes' walk from our hut we came to the edge of a steep and narrow glacier, called here a "couloir." There happened to be a considerable coating of snow on the surface of the ice, and this facilitated our passage; as steps are much more easily cut in hard snow than in ice. The couloir is inclined at an angle of forty-three degrees, as we found by the clinometer, — a small and portable instrument which Hudson had brought

from London for the purpose of measuring inclinations. The chief risk in passing this narrow ice-stream arises from the stones which from time to time become detached from above, and come tumbling down at a tremendous pace: but when we consider that early morning is a favourable time, and that the whole party were across in about eight minutes, it will be seen that the chance of being hit is very small. During the summer months, in consequence of the diminution of the snow, there is no necessity for climbing over the crest of the rocks.

George, Hudson, and Mollard were the last to cross the couloir, but before doing so, Mollard was requested to attach our young companion to him by means of the rope, so as to guard against any possibility of a slip. This was merely an extra precaution, and not one which was really needed, for George was perhaps the most sure-footed of any of the party, as we all easily observed in this trip to Switzerland. As the third chamois hunter was brought solely to attend upon our young friend, ascend as far as was agreeable, and

escort him down the mountain whenever he felt disposed to retrograde, and as Mollard was the one in whom Hudson reposed the most confidence for attention and caution, he was the man selected for this office.

This was one of those numerous spots at which it was necessary to take suitable precautions, for a slip in such a position might have been attended with disastrous consequences, as the ice-stream we were about to cross sloped rapidly away to our right, until lost amid the yawning crevasses of the glacier de Bionassay. Thus by previous knowledge of the nature of the difficulties likely to be encountered, and the proper use of those appliances with which we were provided, all chance of injury was, as we believe, reduced to a minimum.

At exactly twelve minutes past six o'clock A.M., we were on the summit of the redoubtable Aiguille, where we stood for ten minutes to admire the view, which was already vastly extensive to the East, North, and West. Although until a late hour in the afternoon the sky was gloriously clear, and of the deepest blue, yet, from time to time, and particularly

in the early morning, some of the valleys were bathed in a sea of clouds. These, however, by no means impaired the glories of the view, the details of which we had now leisure to examine. The mountain peaks piercing the line of clouds in all directions clothed with their eternal snows,—the pine-clad valleys and pastures running up between the edges of the Pennine chain,— the mountain torrents,— the bubbling gushing Arve meandering playfully through the vale of Chamounix and hurrying onwards to its home in the ocean,— presented a panorama which an artist would delight to study.

The Buet reared his rounded and hoary summit pure and bright as he received the first rays of the morning sun, and far far away to the N.W. the eye could with difficulty discern beyond the Dole the blue waters of Lake Leman backed by the distant range of the Jura. The view that thus greeted us would have repaid even those who find an ascent like the present painful and laborious; but with us it added greatly to the gratification derived from the invigorating play of muscles, and from the consciousness of difficulties over-

come. When the eye is directed from Chamounix towards the point where we now stood, there appears to be a gap between the Aiguille and Dôme; but this is not really the case; for by keeping close to the precipices on the west, — that is, to those overhanging the Glacier de Bionassay,—we escaped all descent, and gently mounted towards the Dôme. We saw a few large crevasses, but they were easily avoided, and we were not obliged to cross one. As it was the western side of the Dôme which we were ascending, the sun's rays were hid from us by the intervening ridge, and the north wind was consequently all the more chilling. When Hudson inquired of George, next to whom he was walking, if he were inconvenienced by the cold, he replied in the affirmative; and as he had only started with the intention of going a part of the way, he thought he might as well beat a retreat at once. This was thought a judicious step; and accordingly Mollard was requested to descend with our young traveller as far as the tent, where they would join Stevenson, and then the two companions would descend to Chamounix by the village of Les Ouches.

Ten minutes later we reached the crest of the Dôme, and then regretted that George had not accompanied us to this point; but when he turned back, we did not know how close it was. When once over the crest of the mountain, we were completely sheltered from the keen wind, and were basking in the sun, and then we heard Cuidet's voice exclaiming, "Voilà le Mont Blanc." And truly it was thrilling and delightful to turn our gaze southwards, and behold, for the first time since we had left Courmayeur, this noble peak, this object of our wishes, no longer separated from us by barriers well-nigh impassable, but which, as it stood out in bold relief against the deep azure sky, seemed rather to hail our approach, and bid us a kindly welcome. When with one brief look, our eyes traversed the Grand Plateau, at our feet, and then, wandering up the steep snows which led directly to the highest summit, there rested for a time, it seemed as though they would never tire gazing at the spectacle. Though Mont Blanc was scarcely fifteen hundred feet above us, there were still many hours of work before the victory would be gained.

The two remaining chasseurs, Cuidet and Hoste, accompanied us for a few hundred yards down the gentle slope which led to the Grand Plateau, and then we halted.

Cuidet pointed out two large crevasses at the upper extremity of the Plateau, and told us the Chamounix route lay between them. This information was useful, but beyond the place where we now stood the presence even of the best-informed guide would have been but of little benefit, since the right direction was well known to us from ocular observation, from examining models of the chain, and from numerous conversations with those who had frequently visited those heights. Our baggage consisted of two knapsacks, which were carried by the different members of our little caravan, —now reduced to five,—Grenville and Christopher Smyth, Kennedy, Ainslie, and Hudson. In the shape of food we had a couple of very diminutive chickens, about a pound of mutton, half a loaf of bread, a few pears and raisins, and one bottle of Frontignan wine. From the point at which Cuidet and his companions had turned back, there were two lines of march open for our choice. One of these led over

the Grand Plateau, and there joined the Chamounix route: the other avoided the Plateau altogether and led up the arrête or ridge which connects the Dôme du Gouté with Mont Blanc, and considered by De Saussure to be impracticable.

Hudson had many times hovered about St. Gervais, and for the last three years had had a strong desire to try this ridge, as it would shorten the ascent by two hours. With regard to the practicability of this route, there exists a diversity of opinion. Those who live at St. Gervais, Bionassay, Bionay, La Vilette, and other adjacent villages, say it is quite impossible to mount Mont Blanc this way on account of a snowy or icy mound which rises abruptly midway. We are ignorant of the *general* idea, at Chamounix, with regard to the difficulties presented by this mound, or "Bosse du Dromedaire," as it is called; but Victor Tairraz, one of the most enterprising and attentive of that staff of guides, stated that he had frequently regarded the Bosse from the Grand Plateau, and he thought it might probably not be an insuperable obstacle.

All our party, on the present occasion, examined the whole arrête very attentively, and especially paid attention to the Bosse du Dromedaire, and our unanimous strong conviction was that there was nothing apparently to stop active determined mountaineers.

If this route be proved pretty easy of accomplishment, the St. Gervais side will indeed offer great advantages; for guides can be had there for a much smaller sum than the Chamounix regulations admit of, and the time and fatigue would be much less. We did not, however, try the "Dromedary's Hump" on this occasion; for the north wind was very strong and cold, and we should have been exposed to its chilling influences for more than two hours, had we climbed this precipitous and completely exposed ridge of snow. Again: as some of our party were obliged to be in England in a few days, we did not like to endanger the success of this their last attempt by trying a route which might have ended in disappointment. We therefore decided in favour of the longer but more certain route through the Corridor and by the Mur de la Côte.

A tolerably rapid descent of thirty-five

minutes took us from the Dôme du Gouté to the further extremity of the Grand Plateau. Here we halted and partook of a second breakfast. After demolishing the greater part of the mutton, and half our stock of bread and wine, we placed our goods and chattels once more in the knapsacks and left them lying in the snow. With the exception of a crust of bread and the few raisins which had been originally divided amongst the party, we left everything on this elevated plane of snow until our return.

As we proposed to descend directly to Chamounix by the "Little Plateau," the Grands Mulets, and the Glacier des Bossons, we took some pains to reconnoitre, with the eye, from the entrance of the Corridor, the probable route we should have to take in descending. We also consulted the excellent map of these snow-fields by Professor Forbes, which Kennedy carried, and from present observations and previous information, we felt pretty certain of our course.

As the snow was rather soft, we agreed that after each of the party had gone in the van for a quarter of an hour, he should fall

to the rear: and by this means the labour of walking first through the snow was divided.

We now commenced our work in good earnest and without a single doubt as to the issue of our undertaking, so far as it depended on our own exertions; for each of the party knew by past experience, that he could depend on every one else for coolness and energetic assistance in any exigency which might arise, and also for steady determination to accomplish what we had begun.

Hudson especially had so many times been baffled on this mountain, for want, as he says, of some tried English hearts, that on the present occasion he was particularly joyous and sanguine. Kennedy was in the front when we started from the Plateau, and he was fortunate in having the post of honour at this, the first and only crevasse in the ascent from St. Gervais; for just as his allotted time for keeping the lead was expiring, we arrived at this natural and sometimes formidable barrier,— this yawning though strikingly beautiful abyss in the glacier. This chasm, the bottom of which we could not see, and which lay directly across our line of march,

is one of a particular class. Though it never for two days together presents precisely the same peculiarities, it is nevertheless permanent in its general features and in its position. It is at present nameless; we venture, however, to call it the Crevasse des Rochers Rouges, since those are the rocks in which it has its south-western extremity. To the right it terminated in impracticable precipices of ice from which the thundering avalanche is constantly falling: and to the left it seemed to run off amongst masses so broken up and tossed about as to forbid approach. Whether it were possible to double the crevasse we did not determine, for we gave but little time to minute examination, since a much simpler means of passing it at once presented itself; and this was a snow bridge.

This is an expression which is doubtless familiar to most of our readers; it is possible, however, that some few of them may not have perfectly clear ideas either of the causes which lead to their formation, or of their general appearances. When situated at great elevations they span crevasses which form in most cases scenes of surpassing beauty and

grandeur. The glacier deeply covered with winter snows moves onwards at an annual rate, varying from two to five hundred feet, and in passing over its rocky bed becomes twisted and contorted into huge and indescribable forms, and penetrated in all directions by cracks and crevasses that at first are but a mere line across the ice. These gradually increase in width until they become gaping chasms many feet in width; the snow which had previously covered the entire surface partly falls into the gulf beneath, and only small portions are left, which form those snow-bridges that afford such essential aid to the traveller. The crevasse which now intercepted our path extended from right to left across a steep inclination of the glacier, and presented the features that are generally seen in all those similarly situated. These features are of surpassing loveliness, and well deserve the name of "Nature's Toys," which has been bestowed upon them by a friend.

The lower edge of a crevasse, sometimes from ten to twenty feet below the upper one, is formed of ice and snow, and is rounded off in each direction; on one side falling away

gradually into the snow slope, and on the other side changing into the walls of the crevasse. Over the upper edge the higher portion of the snow slope projects in the form of the eaves of a thatched roof, and from it glorious icicles six inches in diameter and thirty feet in length are suspended like a fringe of crystals, lining the other side of the chasm. These walls are irregularly vertical; they are of a greenish hue at the top, and as the depth increases they gradually change into a beautiful azure. The crevasse des Rochers Rouges was our first difficulty, and as Kennedy was leader at the time, though with but three minutes to spare when he reached it, it devolved upon him to find a passage.

Ainslie loosened the rope, which he generally carried when it was not being used by the party; and Kennedy, having made one end fast round his waist, advanced pole in hand. Although the bridge was steep and very narrow, and rose up quite into a thin edge, yet, except for a small space in the middle, it was so thick and solid, that the poles could not be forced through it. Hence there was no danger of its breaking with our weight. Care,

however, and steadiness were required in order to avoid all risk of slipping off into the vault beneath.

There was a second bridge more to the left, but this, though broader, appeared insecure, and it actually gave way under its own weight, within a couple of days, as we heard from a friend, the Rev. W. Templer, who passed over ours on the morning of the 16th of August, as he was on his way up Mont Blanc from Chamounix.

When Kennedy reached the opposite bank, he planted his ashen staff firmly in the snow, and gave the rope two or three turns round it; those on the other side tightened it; and then one by one we crossed over, using the line as a balluster, and carefully placing our feet in the old foot-prints.

We were now at the entrance of the "Corridor," a passage which has Mont Blanc to the right, and the Monts Maudits to the left. The lower part of the "Rochers Rouges" forms, indeed, the first portion of the western or right wall of this passage, but both the rocks which are known by the title of "rouge" are only parts of the Dome of Mont Blanc.

Since many of our readers may have traced from the Jura above Geneva a likeness to Napoleon in the contour of this mountain, it may be mentioned as a matter of curiosity, that the Upper Rocher Rouge forms the eye, the lower one the upper lip, and the corridor the mouth of the emperor. The three-cornered cap, so inseparably connected with the first Napoleon, is distinctly visible, though more to the right, when the fancied resemblance is seen from Geneva or any point on the northern side of the mountain.

As we passed along the Corridor, we kept continually mounting, though its inclination is not great. We were now marching nearly due south, in a line at right angles to the great Pennine Chain. Nothing of particular interest occurred; there were no more crevasses; the snow was pretty good, and we scarcely sank ankle deep; and nothing of the plain was visible to the east, south, or west, so completely were we shut in by the snow and rocks. When we reached the upper extremity of the corridor, we stood still at a point overhanging the enormous and very precipitous Glacier de Brenva, which rolls

vast masses of snow and ice almost from the summit of Mont Blanc to the valley below. The excessive steepness of this glacier renders its onward motion so impetuous, that on its arrival in the Allée Blanche, some ten thousand feet below, the ice is forced up against the mountains on the other side of the valley. The Cramont and Saxe, which when seen from Courmayeur had appeared to us by no means unimportant members of the Alps, were now so far beneath us as to be scarcely discernible from the plain. The valleys immediately at the foot of the vast rocky walls, and pinnacles of the south side of the chain, can be well seen from the spot where we now stood, even better than from the summit of Mont Blanc. The peaks of Mont Rosa, Mont Combin, Mont Velan, and the noble Matterhorn, are seen from this point to great advantage. At the expiration of one hour and a half from the Grand Plateau we were at the foot of the Mur de la Côte. The terrible colouring with which Albert Smith has painted this well-known portion of the route has been the fertile source of doubt and hesitation, and has deterred many from attempting the ascent.

The horrors of the Mur de la Côte are perhaps impressed more vividly upon the imagination, by means of the excellent diagram in which are depicted the whole party of guides and travellers, sticking like flies to this "tremendous and almost perpendicular wall of ice," while beneath yawn fearful chasms, into which "a single false step would plunge the unfortunate traveller."

That the impression produced upon the mind should receive its tone according to the temperament of the traveller, and be proportional to the amount of labour required to overcome the difficulties of the ascent, is to be expected. Hence these have been depicted with more or less fidelity by most of those who have met with success.

According to the accounts of some of these travellers, the guides, on their arrival at the extremity of the Corridor, ascend in an oblique direction along the face of the Mur de la Côte, and, after traversing this wall of ice for some time, skirt its south-eastern angle. Hence their path overhangs an awful chasm of the depth of which no notion can be formed.

Instead of adopting the orthodox zig-zag,

we turned directly to the right, meeting the slope "*en face*," and thus avoided these terrible precipices. Should any future traveller follow our route and miss his footing even when near the summit, he would, if ascending, simply lose his labour, and, if descending, he would hasten his return to Chamounix; for in either case he would slide downwards until his course was arrested by the soft snow of the Corridor. To the right we saw considerable quantities of ice bright in the rays of the morning sun. And close upon our left we had the southern glaciers, which fall down many thousand feet so abruptly as to be quite inaccessible from the valley beneath. In such a position, with a steep slope of ice on one side, and precipices on the other, there was no possibility of mistaking the true direction: in fact we had nothing more to do than to mount straight up; and in places where the snow was too hard to be penetrated by our shoes, to cut a few steps with our haches.

Ainslie and Kennedy carried ash poles with steel spikes, which they brought from England; Grenville and Christopher Smyth, and Hudson carried haches, which are ashen poles from

four to five feet in length, with iron heads about ten inches long and sharpened exactly like a small pick-axe. The guides who ascend Mont Blanc from Chamounix always carry two or three of these instruments, which need not be heavier than a short staff, and are lighter than the poles usually used.

The upper part of the Mur de la Côte is the steepest, and here the inclination is forty-six degrees,— about six degrees less than that of the M. Blanc du Tacul. Unfortunately Ainslie's barometer was now *hors de combat*, and Smyth's had long been in the same predicament, so we had no means of accurately measuring the vertical height of this, the most abrupt height of the whole ascent. It did not appear to be more than 300 feet above the Corridor, and yet three quarters of an hour were occupied before it was completely vanquished.

When we had reached the summit of the "Mur" we found a crevasse to our right, which, however, we did not cross, but wandered along its left bank, and were obliged to keep close to the brink, because, a few feet from it, the snow sloped away very rapidly towards the precipice of the Glacier de Brenva.

A few minutes' walking over a tolerable level surface brought us to a large rock which protrudes to a considerable height through the snow: this is called the lower of the "Petits Mulets," and it is well seen from the Dôme du Gouté; whence it was pointed out by Cuidet before he departed, and he remarked at the same time that we should leave it on our left.

The two Smyths, who were in the van during the last part of the ascent of the dreaded Mur, had advanced towards the base of the Calotte or summit of M. Blanc rejoicing in the prospect of immediate success. Unaware of Cuidet's direction, they took the left side of the Petits Mulets, and set to work to scale the last slope of mixed ice and snow which led to the summit. But the path became steeper and steeper, and the thin coating of snow upon the hard ice was insufficient to afford a secure footing. Grenville Smyth soon gave up the attempt and returned to his comrades, who were winding their way to the right of the rocks, but his brother proceeded with hearty good will to cut steps in the hard green ice and soon gained a considerable elevation. We began to think that he had after all chosen the

best route, and he, no doubt, was congratulating himself on having stolen a march upon us, when, to our amusement, a more energetic blow than usual with his axe caused one of his feet to lose its hold from its slippery resting place: the consequences of this were instantaneous; unable to retain his hold of the axe, the point of which remained firmly embedded in the hard ice, he shot down with great rapidity over the cold rough surface, to the discomfiture of his nether garments, until the soft snow of the plain put a stop to his downward course some few yards in our rear. Amused as much as we were at this abrupt check, he quietly emptied his pockets and sleeves of the snow which they had gathered during the fall, and then rejoined our line.

We are not unfrequently told by gentlemen who have attained our present height, and have afterwards published their experience, that every one suffers, more or less, at these great elevations, from nausea, vomiting, and drowsiness, which are sometimes accompanied by bleeding at the nose, eyes, or ears, and by an utter prostration of strength.

Now this is by no means universally true;

for of our party of five here collected together merely from a similarity of tastes, not one at any time experienced the slightest tendency to affections of this character.

Our ascents of Monte Rosa and Mont Blanc confirmed the opinion which past experience had induced us to form; and we have little hesitation in asserting our belief that these symptoms proceed chiefly from fatigue, though they may be increased by the rarity of the air, which compels us to take various precautions, uncalled for in a denser atmosphere.

It was only during our passage of the Corridor that we observed the regular changes at the end of each quarter of an hour; since that time the snow had been hard, and therefore it was as easy to walk first as last. We were now going in single file, and approaching the higher of the Petits Mulets, which is at no very great distance from the rocks previously mentioned.

It will be remembered that one of our party had lost his hache; some one now suggested that steps should be cut to enable him to go forward more easily; but it appeared unadvisable to waste strength which might, and

probably would, have large demands made upon it, before we should have found our way down to Chamounix.

Hudson, however, offered his hache to Smyth as an equivalent for the steps which had been proposed, and, though the offer was declined, he stuck it in the snow, so that it might be taken up as we all moved forward. Though this part of the mountain is not steep, yet the snow was so very hard and slippery, that Hudson, now without an axe, found difficulty in keeping his feet, and was several times obliged to have recourse to his hands, to avoid falling, sometimes going even on all-fours, when the surface of the glacier was a little steeper than ordinary.

Some little time after passing the Petits Mulets, we turned slightly to the right, and then ascended straight to the ridge above us; and from this we looked down to the southern valleys. The eye at once detected a slight rise in this narrow edge, and we all set off by tacit consent for a point which was only a few yards distant, and but three or four feet above us; and when we reached it, we had completed our wishes, for we at last stood on the highest

pinnacle of Mont Blanc. The members of our little caravan stepped almost simultaneously at 12.35 P.M. upon the crown of the monarch, with a feeling of gratification that it is impossible to describe. We looked in each other's face, and there saw reflected an universal beam of satisfaction, and by a spontaneous impulse the hands of all were united in a hearty grasp of congratulation.

There has frequently been put to us the question, "Did the view from the summit repay you for the labour?" An answer might be given in the words

> "Though steep the track,
> The mountain top will overpay, when climb'd,
> The scaler's toil."

We are, however, disposed to think in a spirit totally different from that of such inquirers, and in deciding whether the ascent were gratifying or not, would be guided rather by the answer to the question, "Did the labour of the ascent repay you for the time it occupied?"

It has been remarked that the views of greatest beauty are generally not those commanded by the most elevated spot, and cer-

tainly we found our gaze continually attracted, as new combinations presented themselves while we gradually climbed upwards. From the summit of Mont Blanc, the vast panorama over which the eye wanders, and for a time finds no resting-place, forms a scene, not so much of beauty as one of surpassing grandeur; all minor details are lost, and are engulfed in apparently unlimited extension. It would appear, however, superfluous here to attempt the repetition of a scene which has already been so frequently described; of the ten thousand mountain peaks, therefore, that rise below us we would say but little. It is, however, to the lover of physical geography that such a view affords a peculiar charm and presents its most striking aspect. It is to him a source of great gratification, when thus enabled to contemplate a vast and actual map of the country, to trace the various mountain chains, to distinguish their culminating points, and to note the mode in which these again appear supported by neighbouring buttresses, each a member of the main ridge, yet at the same time distinct as an individual pinnacle.

The eye of the beholder leaves at length

these lofty summits and then slowly travels down the distant mountains' side, and after resting awhile upon the vast glacier fields that there repose, carefully seeks for the first indications of the almost imperceptible stream that issues from their deep recesses. But soon some silvery thread is discerned, then lost, and seen again as the young glacier torrent gradually finds its tortuous way along the valley, until, after leaping over the rocky obstacles that strive in vain to impede its course, the swelling stream is seen to expand into a magnificent lake, next assume the character of one of Europe's mightiest rivers, and finally, when the eye is wearying with this continued demand upon its power, the imagination comes to its relief, and we mentally realise the spot at which the glacier-cradled river merges into ocean.

After a minute's repose, the eye once more reverts to the innumerable mountain summits, always the most conspicuous objects in the panorama, and seeks to distinguish the various Alpine Passes, at one time resting with pleasure upon some difficult col, which none but the experienced mountaineer can

surmount, at another time tracing with far more ease one of those highways of nations which the art of man has carried across the chain. Thus may be seized the opportunity of acquiring fresh knowledge of geographical features, calculated by their beauty to afford a high degree of gratification, and such as cannot be seen to perfection except from a spot that admits of no intervening object. Such is the summit of Mont Blanc, and such are the beauties of a view the characteristics of which we only attempt to indicate, feeling sure that no language can describe the reality.

But in truth the pleasure we enjoyed in this ascent arose not solely from the constant mental attention required in order to select the right path and to overcome all obstacles, nor from the consciousness that our own independance and perseverance had accomplished an undertaking by others deemed impossible; it did not arise solely from gazing at the indescribable deep black blue of the vault above us, nor from breathing the glorious invigorating air that played about our lungs and raised our spirits to their highest pitch; it did not arise solely from examining the vast mass of almost

European dimensions that was spread before us, nor from revelling in the contemplation of an apparently endless succession of rocks, and snows, and glaciers. Had guides accompanied us the whole distance, had no view greeted us from the beginning to the end of the expedition, had even murky fog and gloom shrouded the summit, and overshadowed us with their mournful mantle, still there would have remained to all of us the simple animal pleasure produced by the constant exercise of muscle and sinew. To some such bodily exertion is irksome, to some painful in the extreme, while to others it imparts that increasing flow of life and energy which is the source of a pleasure fully appreciated by all who, like one or two of our party, could row in a boat on which is depicted the motto

"Labor ipse voluptas."

In this motto then is to be found the true answer to the question, "Did the view from the summit repay you for the labour?"

We did not, however, long retain our position there, for, on turning our faces to the north, we were greeted by a most bitter wind, which, though not sufficiently violent to

render our footing insecure, was quite cold enough to render a prolonged stay very unpleasant. It did not occur to us till too late that, if we had descended a few feet on the Italian side, we should have been completely sheltered from the keen blast, and might have sat down in comfort for three quarters of an hour, or even longer. As it was, after a few minutes, the idea of at once descending spontaneously suggested itself to each of the party, and three forthwith proceeded to put it into execution.

Fortunately, one or two remembered, ere too late, that it would be very desirable to examine the steepness of the snows which led immediately from the summit towards the "Bosse du Dromedaire" and the Col du Miage; and with a view to this, C. Smyth and Hudson went forward in a westerly direction, until they gained the other extremity of the ridge. The Bosse du Dromedaire lay at their feet, and as the eye hastily surveyed it, and those parts of the arrête which were visible from this point of observation, they could detect nothing to prevent the ascent of Mont Blanc being made by this route. The Col du Miage was some distance to the left, and they could

see so little of the intervening snow fields as to be unable to offer an opinion as to the practicability of mounting from it. It seems strange that so many years should have passed away without more vigorous exertions having been made to scale this lofty dome from many other points; for surely it is much more interesting to explore and find out some new route, than to follow for ever in the same well-known track.

This may, perhaps, be accounted for, by supposing on the one hand that the peasants do not feel sufficient interest in these matters, to induce them to sacrifice some of the finest days in the year; and, on the other hand, that our own enterprising countrymen, and able mountaineers from other countries, make too limited a sojourn in this land of mountains to enable them to gain that experience of glaciers which is essential before any attempt be made at discovering unknown paths.

But all this time the two are standing alone on the mountain top, exposed to the same unrelenting north wind, while their companions are rapidly descending. Hudson and

Smyth walked back to the highest point, and then, turning to the left, ran down the hard frozen steep towards the Petits Mulets, and as nothing occurred to impede their course, they overtook the others before they reached the first rock. There all stopped for a few seconds to pick up small pieces of the granite which had been splintered from the main block by the action of the frost and weather. Having pocketed our specimens, we hastened forward at a double quick pace until we gained the shelter of the lower of the Petits Mulets. Here we waited six or eight minutes or perhaps more, whilst C. Smyth recovered his hache, and Kennedy and Ainslie tied pieces of ribbon to points of the rocks in places most out of the reach of wind and snow-storms. What a pity Stevenson was not here; he was so well furnished with various sorts of souvenirs collected from different quarters for this very purpose. He had had, however, the satisfaction of bequeathing part of his stock to the care of the rocks on the highest peak of the noble Monte Rosa; and there they will be in far greater security from pilfering hands than on Mont Blanc. Although we were unable on

the summit to have more than a glance round the horizon, yet from our present position we could view everything to the north, east, and west equally well; and the expanse of the mountain-ranges and valleys to the south was seen from the upper extremity of the Corridor; therefore we did not lose anything by our short sojourn on the highest point.

When the pieces of silk were satisfactorily adjusted to the rock, we continued our descent. Our little band were in overflowing spirits, for, entirely free from the most remote idea of "violent sickness or hæmorrhage," we had successively overcome all those difficulties which the graphic powers of Albert Smith have immortalised.

We are now at the summit of the Mur de la Côte, down which, "should the foot slip, or the bâton give way, you would glide like lightning from one frozen crag to another, and finally be dashed to pieces, hundreds and hundreds of feet below, in the horrible depths of the glacier." We, however, left this portion of the Mur a few feet to the right, and selected a safer, although a steeper line of descent.

Exhilarated in the highest degree by the

glorious air, we paused but a moment to cast a hasty glance down the icy wall, and launched forth. One or two of us made use of the half dozen steps we had previously cut, but then finding that the snow was generally in a favourable state, we ventured to descend by an ordinary glissade, and shortly afterwards, amid shouts and cheers, safely landed in the Corridor.

The plan sometimes adopted by the uninitiated, of sitting down on an incline of snow instead of remaining erect, is by no means the most approved or the safest. Indeed, if the snow be hard and the inclination great, this is a dangerous experiment; for the slider soon loses all command of himself, as he is hurled down the steep with a velocity constantly increasing, and though there may be no rocks nor precipices in his course, yet an accident would probably happen.

The warning given by the Sibyl to the son of Anchises, in the words "facilis descensus Averni," might here prove literally true, since in many such cases the slider would never afterwards have an opportunity of testing the amount of labour requisite for retracing his footsteps; the power, however, of descending

these steep snow slopes in safety and with confidence is not to be acquired upon the first attempt. The practice which is necessary recals the exploits of more juvenile days, when in bygone and good old-fashioned English winters, we were accustomed to "take exercise upon the surface of the frozen water;" and even now, in these more degenerate seasons, we have oftentimes delighted to watch certain aspiring young urchins of the rising generation, as they make repeated efforts to go up their slide on one foot, or as they strive to accomplish the still more difficult feat of "knocking at the cobbler's door." So true it is that similar perseverance is required, whether the object of attainment be a slide in the kennel, or a glissade down the Mur de la Côte.

Last summer we found a capital practice-ground in the neighbourhood of Zermatt, where we had the pleasure of meeting with a friend, a native of the Emerald Isle, well known at Cambridge as a celebrated boating character of former days, and until recently as Senior Fellow and Mathematical Lecturer of a college, which, so long as it retained him as stroke and captain of the boat, proudly saw

its flag wave, night after night, at the head of the river. A small party of us made, with this gentleman, an excursion to the Hörnli, and when descending its N. W. shoulder, hailed the numerous opportunities there presented of glissading down its slopes. We repeatedly climbed up the rocks at the side, and then descended the snow, with velocities that varied directly as the inexperience of the performer, and with a successful result, probably inversely proportional to his merits.

In glissading these and similar slopes, the feet of a skilful slider are placed flat upon the snow, about twelve inches apart, and parallel to each other, while his knees are kept slightly bent, with body and head erect, and the alpenstock carried nearly horizontally in both hands, after the manner in which a balancing pole is poised by a tight-rope dancer. If the slider be able to check his speed, and ultimately to stop his onward motion, by the usual mode of raising his toes and driving his heels into the snow, the steepest descent need not alarm him; for should these expedients prove insufficient, he would rapidly bring his alpenstock into use, and then by thrusting

the point into the snow about six inches behind him, somewhat as a kangaroo uses his tail, and by throwing the weight of his body backwards upon the pole, he would be able to arrest his course, at a time when the snow might be so steep and slippery as to expose a less experienced traveller to considerable danger.

In illustration of this remark, we may allude to a little expedition made in January, 1853, to the summit of the Dôle, one of the highest points of the Jura. The whole range was deeply covered with soft snow, and consequently longer time than usual was occupied by Hudson and his friend Jackson before they gained the summit, while it was also necessary to scale an intervening wall of snow some fourteen or fifteen feet in height. This was nearly vertical; for when the two travellers stood at its foot and leaned slightly forward, their chests touched the snow. The certainty of falling backwards off the face of the wall was avoided by laying hold of a pole which was deeply thrust into the snow, and when the first three steps were made and mounted, the pole was cautiously withdrawn, and placed

in a similar position a little higher up: by constantly acting thus, the highest plateau was ultimately reached.

After watching for some time the ever varying hues which a brilliant setting sun produced on the far-distant snows of Mont Blanc, the pair prepared to descend. Hudson buttoned his coat, put his pole behind him, and went to the brink: then by a slight motion of the feet, he worked himself over the edge, dropped in an erect position on the more gradual slope below, and finally was brought to a stand-still by the quantity of soft snow which collected in his passage. Jackson prepared to follow, but not aware of the consequences of sitting down, he was suddenly seen in the position sometimes unwillingly assumed by a skater when his feet slip from under him, and in one second he was dashed downwards in all possible positions; his body was completely concealed by the quantity of fine icy particles thus set in motion, and it was not until he had been rolled thirty yards beyond his friend that motion had ceased. Hudson had placed himself in apparently the direct line of descent, but so great was the rapidity

of the transit, and so blinding the fine snow, that he could not see where to make a snatch at his companion. Jackson was speedily on his feet and unhurt, though suffering sorely from the cold instantly communicated by the introduction of so much foreign matter inside his boots, trowsers, shirt, and neck.

A few seconds sufficed to knock off most of the exterior snow from the clothes, hands, and hair; a brisk beating of the arms partially removed the feeling of extreme cold, and Hudson's cap replaced the one which had absented itself without leave, and continued rolling on its edge until lost over the precipice. This is not the way to descend the Mur de la Côte.

Nothing occurred as we ran down the Corridor: we soon reached the snow-bridge over the crevasse, which was passed in safety, after we had taken the same precautions as in the morning.

In a few minutes we were once more on the Grand Plateau, and standing near the scene of our breakfast. It was now 1.40 P.M., so that a little more than one hour had sufficed to bring us a distance which had cost three hours and three quarters in the ascent, although

there were two halts in the descent, and none as we were mounting.

The diminutive poulet was equally divided into five parts, and distributed amongst the party by Kennedy, who shortly afterwards proceeded to a like distribution of six pears. No one remembers what he did with the sixth: doubtless he disposed of it in a way that afforded general satisfaction. The wine shared the same fate; and nothing of the general stock remained but an atom of mutton and an equally insignificant piece of bread.

It is now a little past two, and we have but five hours of actual daylight, in which to descend several thousand feet over snow-fields abounding in huge crevasses, and swept in parts by the constant succession of avalanches that fall from the Dôme du Gouté, and we have also to cross the Glacier des Bossons, where darkness would be still more trying and unpleasant than even on the higher parts of the mountain.

All the party are, consequently, eager for a start without any waste of time; so we will get under weigh. A few minutes brought us to the lower extremity of the plateau, close to the

huge blocks which fall from the Dôme, and there we commenced the descent in good earnest.

The snow was very soft, owing to the action of the sun, and we sank sometimes nearly knee-deep, and since this much increases the chance of breaking through into a hidden abyss, we fastened ourselves together with the rope, leaving intervals of four or five yards between each two.

We were at this moment passing the appalling crevasse into which the guides who accompanied Dr. Hamel, in 1820, were swept by an avalanche. No other fatal accident has occurred on Mont Blanc: we are therefore unwilling to pass by without some notice; but as Albert Smith has given an interesting account of the melancholy event, it is unnecessary to make more than a cursory allusion.

Dr. Hamel was sent out by the Russian Government to make experiments on Mont Blanc; and, with this view, he first attempted to ascend from the St. Gervais side, and by the Aiguille du Gouté, when he succeeded in reaching the summit of the Dôme, a spot just one thousand feet higher than the Aiguille.

The caravan did not go beyond this point; the reason for the failure, as given by the peasants, being, that the doctor had in the earlier part of the day roamed about too much; and that, though a very strong and active man, this needless exertion had begun to tell upon him, when they had reached this great elevation. Dr. Hamel then proposed to bivouac on the Dôme and endeavour to reach the summit the following morning; but to this his guides would by no means consent, as they had made no preparations for passing the night on the snow. The next time the gentleman tried the monarch, Chamounix was the starting point, and the first night the party slept at the "Grands Mulets."

The snow began to fall heavily at this time, and when the usual starting hour arrived, the fresh snow was lying to a considerable thickness on the mountain.

Under these circumstances it is always very hazardous to cross or mount a steep slope which has either precipices or crevasses lying at its foot: and the reason is obvious; freshly fallen snow will slide down any steep incline, such as the roof of a house or slopes of ice,

grass or hard frozen snow, and if in sufficient quantity will oftentimes form an avalanche, sweeping everything before it in its progress. It was to such a risk that Dr. Hamel's party were exposed when his guides pursued their way directly from the Grand Plateau to the summit by the only route then known. By taking the route as at present pursued by La Vallée, and the Mur de la Côte, they would probably have escaped uninjured. They, however, left a huge crevasse just below their line of march, and were walking in single file, so that they thus cut through the layer of fresh snow, and started an avalanche which swept most of the caravan away, and hurried five of the guides into the yawning abyss beneath. Of these five, two were afterwards released by their companions, but the other three remained too deeply buried for human assistance to be of any avail.

After descending for some little time we reached the Little Plateau, over which are scattered in chaotic confusion the debris of innumerable avalanches. These avalanches pour down from the heights of the Dôme du Gouté, and are professedly regarded with the

greatest dread by the leaders of the Chamounix caravans. Here, too, the guides perform the farce of enjoining on the traveller perfect silence lest the slightest whisper should arouse these sleeping guardians of the mountain. When we saw Victor Tairraz (of whom mention has been already made), after his descent from Mont Blanc two days subsequently to our own, he said we had run great risk on the Little Plateau because we had approached too near to the Dôme whence fall these masses of ice and snow. In this we disagreed with him for the following reasons: —

Firstly. Because no *recent* avalanche had descended so low as the part which we had traversed, and therefore it was improbable that the next, which must start from the same point, and under exactly similar circumstances, would continue its course over a much greater space than its immediate predecessor.

Secondly. It was highly improbable that an avalanche would fall during the minute or minute and a half required to cross its line of march; and even supposing one had started at that critical instant, it would have required more time to reach us than would

have sufficed for us to have run to a place of safety.

Lastly, the avalanches which fall from the Dôme du Gouté upon the Little Plateau pass transversely over it, that is, over the inclined plane down which we were descending, and therefore it was still more easy to judge of the point at which we should be beyond their reach. We cannot but think that judgment, combined with experience, may enable a man, though passing at no great distance from the run of these falling blocks, to be comparatively in perfect security.

Since we speak so confidently of the course of these avalanches, and of the ease with which they may be avoided, it may be well to introduce some slight description of their nature, lest our readers suppose we wish to ignore a real danger by a mere bold and sweeping assertion.

We will, for simplicity, divide avalanches into two classes.

1. Those composed of snow.
2. Those consisting of ice or Nevé.

1. The former descend from the tops and sides of all mountains of sufficient altitude,

either immediately after a snow storm, or during the first hot days of spring, when the wintry covering begins to disappear; and it is these which in their resistless course carry havoc into the lowest valleys, overwhelming villages and tearing up the trees of the forest. They have all, however, fallen long before the arrival of the great body of Swiss travellers.

2. Above a certain elevation the snow, as a general rule, does not become sufficiently thawed and saturated with water to enable the succeeding frosts to render it of the nature of ice; and when this is the case it is called Nevé. Nevé is easily distinguished from the glacier ice, for it is always of a dead dull white, and never assumes the glacier transparency or brilliancy.

The avalanches composed of ice or Nevé are confined to the snowy mountains and glaciers, and these differ in character from the first, and have their origin in other causes.

The experiments of Professor Forbes, and other scientific men, establish a fact evident indeed to a superficial observer; the fact, that all glaciers and inclined snow-fields of the Higher Alps have a downward motion, vary-

ing in velocity according to the inclination of the beds over which they roll.

In these, as in other mountainous regions, are found numerous precipices, and at the spots where they occur, whether in the bed of an ice-stream, or at the edge of a steep snow-field, there a constant succession of avalanches is maintained throughout the year. In illustration we will instance that part of the Dôme du Gouté which rises in the form of a wall from the extreme western boundary of the Little Plateau. The masses of Nevé which clothe the eastern side of the Dôme are constantly moving downwards towards the Little Plateau, and when they arrive at the edge of the wall or precipice, they are hurled down, and carried by the impetus thus acquired to different distances over the snow-plain below. For a time all is quiet, but ere long the mass above, descending with slow and noiseless step, has again forced onwards to the edge of the precipice its lower extremity, and this, being unsupported, falls like its predecessors from its own weight, and rolling down spreads itself over the same extent of plain, and scatters about a like amount of confused debris.

Since, then, the position of these precipices is always the same, a slight examination will enable any one to determine at what distance he will be out of danger from the masses which fall from their summits.

We were now crossing large tracts of Nevé, the surface of which is always covered with pretty recent snow, for we were still 12,000 feet above the sea. The crevasses in Nevé are generally wider and more fantastic than those in the ice, and of these we had abundant and magnificent specimens; for no sooner had we passed one, than another appeared a little below us; and, as it was not always easy to see where they terminated, we were constantly obliged to keep a sharp look-out, so as not to be compelled to retrace our steps, in consequence of arriving at the edge of one, at some distance from either extremity. Ainslie was our leader from the Grand Plateau to the region of the Grands Mulets, and very cool and careful he showed himself, as we wandered down those long expanses of snow, which stretch away from the western foot of the Dôme de Gouté. From the time that we were about on a level with the Grands Mulets to

the hour which saw us fairly on the Glacier des Bossons, many changes took place in our relative positions: for we were obliged to untie ourselves and go separate from time to time, in consequence of the complicated nature of the fissures in the ice, and the steep though short slopes which once or twice came in our path. At this time too we had not come to an unanimous decision as to whether we should adopt the Chamounix route, and cross the Glacier des Bossons from the Grands Mulets to the Pierre de l'Echelle; or attempt to go at once from the ice to the Montagne de la Côte, a vast pine-clothed rocky promontory that rises up and separates the wide-spreading ice-field into the Glaciers des Bossons and Taconnay. In the last century it was by the Montagne de la Côte that attempts were made to gain the summit of Mont Blanc; and De Saussure took this route when he ascended. For many years this track has been abandoned in consequence of the difficulty of getting from the mountain to the glacier. That part of a glacier which skirts a mountain is always contorted into shapeless masses, and this effect had been produced to a greater degree than

usual throughout the space immediately at our feet. The Glaciers des Bossons and Taconnay were here intersected with awkward fissures, and as we approached their junction, this rugged character became more and more striking; our eyes therefore glanced rapidly round, seeking the route that offered the fewest obstructions. Ainslie at this moment was leader, the rope being attached to his waist and connected with the remainder of the party. We had just arrived at the top of a perpendicular dip in the glacier surmounted by projecting snow. He approached the edge with the intention of reconnoitring, but his feet were upon smooth ice and instantly slipped from under him. He was, however, held up by the rope and gradually lowered until he arrived in soft snow thirty feet beneath. It was proposed to lower the party one at a time by means of the rope, but then for a moment the question arose as to who should be left last to come down alone. No one was willing to yield this post of honour, and when Ainslie told us that there was plenty of soft snow at the bottom, all determined to enjoy the fun of a slide and a jump, and completed the

descent more or less successfully: Kennedy, however, did not make a very good start, and pitching head-foremost, came rolling down over and over several yards in the snow, and contributed greatly to the general amusement of the party.

It was about five o'clock when we arrived at a point situated on the edge of the Glaciers des Bossons and Taconnay, and only a few hundred yards from the summit of the Montagne de la Côte, which was just below us. We first went in the direction of terra firma, but in each attempt to gain it, were brought up by enormous and impassable crevasses. We next tried to mount the Glacier des Bossons, but here again we were effectually stopped by similar obstacles. Upwards of an hour was thus spent, and, after many fruitless attempts, we found we had made no progress.

It wanted but an hour of sunset, an hour that would be fully needed for crossing the glacier even should we be so fortunate as to discover a passage, while, if unsuccessful in our attempt, we should be forced either to retrace our steps, and take up our quarters on

the Grands Mulets, or pass the night on the ice without any shelter. This would have been very disagreeable, though not dangerous to our party, for none of us were fatigued, and therefore we should have been able to keep ourselves warm by exercise, until the sun rose once more to cheer us on our way. Happily, however, we made an attempt a little higher up, when Hudson and C. Smyth, with rope attached and axe in hand, went forward, and with great skill and determination literally forced a passage, among bridges of snow, and over ridges and crags of ice: the rest of us followed; and in two or three minutes we were all standing on the Glacier des Bossons, leaving the most difficult crevasses in our rear. The passage from the Glacier de Taconnay to that of Des Bossons was effected. We now walked at a quick pace directly across the glacier, and easily avoided the numerous chasms which appeared on all sides. We were roped together in the manner already described, so as to avoid the possibility of an accident in case of a slip. This precaution was quite necessary, for as we were crossing a narrow ridge of ice between the crevasses, one

of our party, who happened to be second in the line, suddenly disappeared in the deep chasm on our right. As Hudson was first, he had for the moment more than his proper share of the weight to support; but quickly recovering himself, he soon disengaged his head and shoulders from the strap to which the rope was attached, and gazed down into the azure vault. The third in our line instantly drew the rope tight, and dropped with one knee on the snow. The jerk dragged his hand eight or ten inches through the soft surface, but receiving without delay the ready support of those behind, and finding that Hudson relieved him of half the tension, he easily kept his position.

In the meantime we were in some anxiety, for although we felt his weight, we knew not whether some injury might not have been sustained in the fall. For a second or two we listened breathlessly to the sounds of the falling axe as it rebounded from side to side. But there was no cause for anxiety, for the rope was tough, and those above knew that they could extricate a single individual. Our friend, perfectly calm and collected, desired us

to lower him a couple of feet, that he might obtain standing room on a ledge of ice, but when we were on the point of complying with his request, he changed his tactics, and told us to raise him about a yard. This accomplished, he was enabled to rest his feet on a projecting block of ice, and lean his back against the opposite side, from which position of greater comfort, he discovered a similar resting-place higher up, and gave the word for us again to haul at the rope. When this operation had been performed, perhaps some three times, he was enabled to get hold of one end of a hache, and by its aid was finally drawn over the brink in safety.

This incident delayed us about ten minutes, and then, with a general feeling of thankfulness that in crossing the Glacier des Bossons we had not neglected our usual precautions, and that they had proved efficient in this emergency, we started once more for the edge of the glacier.

We had now some splendid views, as the mists which partially obscured them opened or lifted from time to time. Above this thin veil of clouds there was still the same glorious

deep blue sky against which the Dôme du Gouté, Monts Maudits, and the Aiguille du Midi especially, were portrayed in fine relief. Add to this the setting sun, which at this hour caused these vast peaks of mixed snow and rock to glow with the rich rose colour, so vividly impressed upon the memories of all who are familiar with Alpine scenes, and consider the wild solitude of the ice-bound regions where wandered our little caravan. Let the reader picture to himself this happy combination, glance upwards as the fleecy drapery once more rolls off, and he will form but a faint idea of the thrilling and gorgeous spectacle which was there revealed. Time pressed, however, and we hastened across the ice: a few minutes brought us to the edge of the glacier. This was, of course, much broken up from its contiguity to the mountain, and a few steps had at times to be cut in huge blocks of ice over which our route lay. We could only keep our balance by touching the adjacent wall of ice which reared itself to our right; but after one or two easy springs, with no little satisfaction to ourselves, we once more landed upon hard solid rocks, with nothing in

the shape of snow or ice between us and the valley 5000 feet below.

It was about seven o'clock, and the full light of day was disappearing, though it was not dusk. We passed the Pierre de l'Echelle, which is at the foot of the Aiguille du Midi, and under which the Chamounix guides leave from year to year the ladder used by them in crossing some of the crevasses of the Glacier des Bossons. We descended the right bank of this glacier very rapidly for an hour in hopes of reaching the valley. How valuable now was every moment we could call our own! We hurried on, leaping from rock to rock, clearing the mountain streamlets with unchecked speed, and flying over every obstacle that opposed our progress. While a single ray of light remained, our cry still was "onwards, onwards, and Chamounix is gained." But this rapid course could not continue; our energies were unexhausted, but against the approach of darkness it was impossible to contend. The last lingering rays had long since departed from the summits of the mountains, the shades of evening had closed around, and as the dusky mantle of night gradually

enveloped surrounding objects, our pace slackened, our step became less certain, and soon we cautiously advanced with no other beacons than the glimmering lights in the distant village of Chamounix. After crossing some mountain streams we reached, though not without difficulty, the borders of civilisation. But owing to the darkness of the pine woods, we lost all traces of a path and wandered on almost at random. Some hay chalets belonging to the peasants were passed, and we hoped to find at least one human being amongst them who would undertake to guide us to the village. But all were deserted; for so little are these simple people in fear of robbers, that they leave their property upon the mountain sides entirely unprotected. A few goats gave signs of life by their continuous bleating, and this was the only answer to our repeated knocks and shouts. As we had little chance of a hospitable reception from them, we turned away, and again, but without success, attempted to gain the valley at our feet. Here we were at a complete standstill, not an hour's distance from half-a-dozen good hotels, and only some few hundred feet above the valley: both, how-

ever, seemed unattainable. We called a halt in the wood and held a council of war. Further progress under the circumstances was deemed unadvisable by three of the party. It was past nine o'clock; we were all of us more or less sleepy from the day's fatigue, and making a virtue of necessity, stretched ourselves upon the hard earth, until dawn. Neither Hudson nor Ainslie were, however, disposed to give in without another vigorous attempt to gain the valley, and having taken the knapsacks and rope they started on a voyage of discovery. Ainslie preferred trying to descend through the forest, in order to remain on the Chamounix side of a mountain torrent: Hudson, on the other hand, preferred the open ground, where the trees were cleared away, and trusted to finding a bridge, or to being able to ford the stream of the Arveiron, when they had reached the valley. After a short discussion this was the route they first selected, and having emerged from the forest, they crossed the neighbouring stream, and immediately commenced their descent.

They had not, however, proceeded far before the ice-axe, which was used as a probe,

gave intimation that they were at the edge of a precipitous slope of rock, and as it was impossible to discover how deep this extended, they were compelled to stop, or the descent would have been dangerous.

The pair now retraced their steps, and passing over the rustic bridge, were speedily involved in the deep gloom of the pine woods. The darkness was intense as they attempted to force their way through the brushwood which alone afforded them support in their downward course. It was not long before Hudson found himself unintentionally sitting upon some wet moss, which did not add to his comfort; but putting one end of the rope round his waist, he proceeded to reconnoitre, when finding that they were again on the brink of some steep descent, they determined to abandon further attempts.

Having stretched themselves on a mossy bank close at hand, they sought sweet repose, and after having enjoyed a brief interval of refreshing sleep, they were once more a-foot, and remounted to their companions' quarters, whence they went to investigate the châlet which had been passed shortly after dark.

The contents of the building proved to be dry new hay; Ainslie therefore went back for the trio, and in a few minutes all our party were ensconced in this most luxurious couch. Taking off our wet boots, we buried ourselves in the garnered produce of the mountain's side, and almost before we had time for congratulation on our good fortune, fell fast asleep. Many silent hours passed swiftly by before a stir was made in our band of five. The sun had already risen some time when the call was given at half past five to rise and pursue our way to Chamounix. The luxuries of a warm bath and clean linen, to say nothing of a substantial breakfast, were too alluring a vision to allow of any relapse into a second slumber. We made a hasty toilet, which consisted simply in putting on our half-dry boots, and washing our faces and hands in a neighbouring stream, and then, without any difficulty, we regained the path a few yards below the chalet and descended in safety to Chamounix.

So ended our adventure. No congratulatory crowds of guides and friends came out to meet us and to welcome us to Chamounix. No triumphal procession was granted to cele-

brate our victory over the proud monarch. The cannons in the yard of the Hotel de Londres, which peal forth their loud salutes to greet the return of successful adventurers, were silent. Nor did the table overflow with the veritable champagne de Mont Blanc, which, in accordance with time-honoured custom, is usually provided by the generous hospitality of the landlord. Unnoticed as any other travellers might be, we crossed the wooden bridge. Crowds there were assembled in the narrow street engaged in busy converse, but of this we were not the theme. A report, indeed, was getting rife that certain Englishmen had started two days before from St. Gervais, and had fixed upon the summit of Mont Blanc as the goal of their ambition. Besides this, too, a waiter, with a soul above his station, had, on the previous day, when looking through the telescope of the hotel, seen five black spots, having the appearance of humanity, moving over the surface of the Calotte, and within a couple of hundred yards of the actual summit. This discovery he had duly reported, but an announcement so extraordinary met with no credit. Either the waiter had taken an extra

glass of wine, or some peculiar species of animalculæ were wandering over the lenses of the telescope, or, perhaps, some strange creatures from foreign parts had strayed from their right latitude, and were roving amid the solitudes of the glaciers. However, no supposition could be more absurd than that a small party of Englishmen should have actually ascended from some other point,—that they should have overcome the difficulties of the route, — and finally, without guides, without a ladder, and without a knowledge of the path usually pursued, have arrived at Chamounix.

How determined are the Chamounix guides to cause an ascent without their assistance to be regarded as impracticable, may be gathered from the fact that to a question upon the point recently put to them by a friend of Smyth's, they replied, with an expressive shrug, "Eh, Monsieur, c'est tout-à-fait impossible!" The day after our arrival, our friend the Rev. William Templer, with the stipulated number of guides, made the ascent. It was highly satisfactory to watch him from the Breven as he toiled up the steep slope of snow above the Grands Mulets continually in his necessarily zig-zag climb,

crossing and recrossing our trail, which in its straight and directly downward course was plainly perceptible. As he followed our track he was much amused by the observations which the guides made relative to the mad Englishmen who "knew nothing and feared less," and had passed over the same spots two days previously; and on his arrival at the summit he felt an additional glow of satisfaction when he was there welcomed by the still fresh traces of those friends, who, on his departure for the ascent not many hours before, had wished him "Bon voyage."

In instituting a brief comparison between the old route and the one which we pursued, it may be mentioned that St. Gervais is about 2600 feet above the sea, and Chamounix 900 feet higher. The Grands Mulets, where the first night is passed, is 10,000 feet, and our stone hut at the foot of the Aiguille between 9000 and 10,000 feet above the level of the sea. Six hours, exclusive of halts, is ample time to allow between St. Gervais and the hut, and thence to the summit of Mont Blanc, we found that eight hours thirty-five minutes

were required. There are no crevasses to be crossed until the Chamounix route is gained on the Grand Plateau, and scarcely any glacier walking until the morning's climb has carried the traveller to the summit of the Aiguille du Gouté, a height of 13,000 feet. Six hours' mounting is considered good work from Chamounix to the Grands Mulets, and the Rev. W. Templer, who is a remarkably fast climber, occupied nine hours in ascending thence to the highest point of Mont Blanc, although he had the great advantage of seeing our footprints on the snow. This distance has frequently been traversed in less time; considering, however, the soft state of the snow, we have little doubt but that Mr. Templer's ascent was one of the quickest. These particulars will enable every one to compare the respective advantages of the two routes.

If the lover of mountain scenery prepare with sufficient forethought, if his skies be as serene as those that smiled on us, if the harmonious temper of his party reign as unbroken, as in our little band; then will he never regret the impulse that led him to seek

amid the glacier-fields of Mont Blanc, a test of energy and perseverance. If, too, our narrative shed any light upon his path, then will our remuneration be more ample even than that of a guide at Chamounix.

TOTAL COST OF THE ASCENT.

	Fr.	*c.*		
Mouton rôti	6	0		
Veau	5	0		
2 poulets	5	0		
20 œufs	1	0		
1 kil. beurre frais	1	70		
1 kil. sucre	1	60		
1 hect. thé	2	0		
3 bout. vin	4	50		
Cognac	1	50		
Esprit de vin		70		
4 pains	2	20		
Poires		50		
Raisin Malaga	1	0		
1 ce. chocolat	2	0		
1 bougie		50		
2 bout. Frontignan	10	0		
Aux guides — vin, pain, fromage	4	0		
Clous pour les souliers		60		
				49 80
6 porteurs à 5 fr.	30	0		
3 chasseurs à 25	75	0		
1 porteur et du lait	9	0		
Du charbon, Du chocolat, Des pastilles, La farine	5	0		
Pour faire descendre les effets	10	0		
				129 0
			7)	178 80
				25 54½

An expense just over 1*l.* for each member of our party.

ASCENT OF MONTE ROSA

IN 1854.

MONTE ROSA and Mont Blanc form, as is well known, the advanced guards of the Pennine chain of Alps — the Red Rose imparting a glow to the eastern extremity of the range, while the White Rose spreads over the western extremity a more snow-like mantle. In the present century, and on the soil of Switzerland, is seen a semblance of the wars which, 400 years ago, distracted the commonwealth of England; and the Monarch of Chamounix, so long accustomed to receive his annual tribute of homage, finds his regal sway disputed, while the traveller knows not whether to enlist beneath the standard of York or Lancaster. Which of the rivals possesses the higher title to our allegiance has been but recently determined. Both, however, irresistibly claim the admiration of all who delight

in natural beauty, so that, although the number of travellers who hasten to the foot of Mont Blanc does not diminish, every year sees an increase in the list of those attracted by the magnificence of Monte Rosa.

The height of Mont Blanc is stated to be 15,744 English feet; and upon the authority of M. de Saussure, an altitude of 15,760 English feet is given to Monte Rosa. The more recent estimate of Von Welden reduces this height to 15,158 English feet, while the latest trigonometrical survey gives an altitude of 15,284 feet. Messrs. Ordinaire and Purisseux, of Besançon, were the first who attempted the ascent from Zermatt, but they only succeeded in reaching the snow plateau between the Nord End and the Höchste Spitze. The same ridge was gained by Professor Ulrich in 1848, and in 1849 by Professors Ulrich and Gottlieb Studer, when Matthias zum Tauchwald (one of Studer's guides) rendered the Professors considerable assistance by effecting the ascent alone. No further attempt to reach the highest point was, I believe, made until July, 1854, when Mr. S. D. Bird ascended to a point within 100 feet from the summit. Mr. Bird was

followed, on September 1, 1854, by the three Messrs. Smyth, of Lincolnshire; and these gentlemen were on their second attempt perfectly successful. They were accompanied by three guides, and by the young man who is waiter at the hotel upon the Ryffelberg.

On Friday, September 8, 1854, I started from the inn on the Ryffelberg near Zermatt, at two A.M., accompanied by Albrecht Alexander and the two brothers Tauchwald, as guides. We skirted the northern side of the Gorner glacier, and then crossed the glacier itself. The moon was nearly full; and, although the sky was cloudless, the great amount of light allowed but few stars to be seen. Around us was a mass of mountain, snow, and glacier — part glittering in the bright moonlight, part buried in deep shadow. The walk was full of interest and excitement, for even at this early hour the high peaks appeared to be indebted to the dawn of day for a greater amount of illumination. It is possible that this was the result of imagination. We were, however, looking forward with some anxiety to the first indication of sunrise, as from it we should be enabled to form an opinion as to the probable

clearness of the coming day; while our spirits were raised considerably above their customary level — for even had external objects not been a sufficient cause of elevation, there still existed the thought that many hours of labour were before us, and that the goal we had proposed was one which few had attempted to reach, and one in the attainment of which still fewer had succeeded.

The morning was exceedingly cold. The pools in the glacier had frozen during the night to a thickness sufficiently great to bear the weight of a youth; and the whole surface of the glacier and icy pool was coated over with a hoar-frost that sparkled beautifully in the light of the moon, and crunched beneath the foot with that peculiar sound which every one has experienced on a bright frosty morning in England. After a walk over snow and glacier of eight or nine hours, we reached a point, which, to the best of my judgment, is about sixty feet below the summit. Before this, all the guides had expressed doubt and hesitation. Here, however, one of the Tauchwalds went on first in order to ascertain whether further ascent were practicable. He gained the sum-

mit; but, upon his return, at the end of three-quarters of an hour, we were too benumbed and dispirited to climb further; and were consequently obliged to return to the Ryffelberg, much chagrined at the failure.

However, on Monday, September 11, I again made the attempt, and was accompanied by Johann and Matthias zum Tauchwald, as guides, by Benedict Leir, the waiter at the inn at Zermatt, an active young fellow, who has been to the summit of Mont Blanc, and by Mr. Cholmley—each of my companions having his own guide. We started at two o'clock, A.M., and took a more direct and better route, crossing to a spot called Auf der Platte, instead of passing by that called Ob den See. We reached the snow plateau, at the base of the cone, at 8.30.; but I regretted to find that we had travelled too rapidly, and that Mr. Cholmley had, in consequence, fallen somewhat behind; this lost ground he never recovered. After waiting upon the plateau for rest and food, we commenced the last climb at 9.0. This is by far the most difficult part of the whole course. The cone is a very steep rock, about 400 feet in height: its hollows and

crevices being filled with hard and slippery ice. It should be clambered up as quickly as possible: to remain stationary, as I did upon the first ascent, is a fatal error; for so great is the cold that, if the hand (wet with snow) be allowed to rest upon the rock for about a minute, it becomes frozen. All who have ascended both mountains are unanimous in the opinion that, although the ascent of Mont Blanc demands a longer endurance of fatigue than does that of Monte Rosa, yet that the last climb of 400 feet required for Monte Rosa exceeds in difficulty any part of Mont Blanc; it occurs, too, at a time when great exertion is peculiarly trying. We reached the summit at 9.45, and remained half an hour. We planted a red flag upon the pole, in addition to Mr. Smyth's shirt, which we left still floating in the breeze. I had been fortunate as to weather in many ascents, but it had never, I think, fallen to my lot to survey so gorgeous a panorama. The sky overhead and around, as far as the eye could reach, was a glorious deep purple blue. To the south, Italy was partially clouded; but the sun shining brightly upon the masses of vapour, floating at a depth of

probably 8000 feet below us, formed a far more beautiful picture than would have been presented by the uninteresting plains of Lombardy. We gazed down upon the valleys that penetrate to the foot of Monte Rosa, and could trace the stream of the Anza, from its glacier source to the point where it is lost in the Lago Maggiore. To the east, in the far distance, rose the mountains of Tyrol. On the north, we looked down upon the Bernese Oberland, clearly distinguishing, far below us, the summit of nearly every mountain. On the north-west, we could perceive the Jura, and the ridges that rise above the Lake of Geneva. On the west, our mighty rival raised his haughty head, turning towards us (as if in anger at our downward glance) his harshest and most rugged aspect. And far again to the south-west, we saw the towering Mont Cenis, with a long and unknown mountain range stretching away until lost in a thin blue haze that we could readily believe to be the Mediterranean.

The summit is very remarkable. It is not compact rock, but consists of a number of huge and irregular stones that appear to have

been thrown together by the action of some powerful agent. They seem to be partly mountain limestone, and partly micaceous and quartose schist, interspersed with a large quantity of talc and slate. It may be rash to form an opinion as to the origin of this remarkable cone, and I would therefore only throw out the suggestion that the summit may formerly have been considerably higher and more compact. Numerous and well-known causes of disruption may have worked together, and the time would arrive when the mountain peak would crack and split up into innumerable masses of varied shape and size. The cone as now seen would be the result.

Travellers who have visited Chamounix, and also the neighbourhood of Monte Rosa, generally give the palm for grandeur and magnificence to Monte Rosa. The mountain alone, even though the unequalled Matter-Horn were excluded, would almost induce a preference over Mont Blanc; and if those who have not time to compare the beauties of both select Monte Rosa, they will escape the high charges, the exorbitant payment demanded for guides and mules, and the absurd and vexatious re-

gulations that annoy the visitor at Chamounix. There is, however, in addition to this consideration, a feature in the neighbourhood that has escaped the notice of even Mr. Murray. The range of mountain called the Mischabel, which separates the valleys of Saas and St. Nicholas, has been recently ascertained to be the highest in Switzerland. This is the result of a survey instituted by the Government. The Dom, or Graben-Horn, is the culminating point of the range; it rises to the height of 15,440 English feet, which is 1000 feet higher than the summit of the Finster Aar-Horn, the highest mountain in the Bernese Oberland. It is generally believed that these secluded valleys were at one period peopled by colonies from Asia, and this supposition is considerably strengthened by the circumstance that Mischabel is compounded of two Arabic words, signifying "The Highest in the Midst."

On Monday, August 28th, 1854, we started at three o'clock, A.M., with the intention of attempting to ascend the Dom. It was the first time that the attempt had been made. The party consisted of Herr Imseng (the well-known and respected Curé of Saas), two guides,

Mr. Stevenson (a college friend, who, to my regret, returned to England before the ascent of Monte Rosa), and myself. We skirted the glacier of Fee, and made for a point in the snow ridge, slightly to the south of the Kleine Mischabel. We followed this ridge in a south-easterly direction, until we had gained a height of about 14,600 feet—a height considerably above the other portions of the Mischabel range—a spot hitherto untrodden by the foot of man, and one whence we looked down upon all the crested summits of Switzerland. The weather was brilliant, and the view exceedingly grand. The guides, however, said that the steepness of the snow prevented further progress, and we were therefore obliged to return again to Saas. We shall probably, however, hear next year of some determined cragsman who has succeeded in planting his flag upon the summit.*

Perhaps I may be forgiven if, in concluding this long description, I venture to offer a few

* This anticipation has been realised by Mr. K. A. Chapman of Trinity College, Cambridge, who gained the highest point in the summer of 1855. Of several attempts this is the only one that has been rewarded by success.

words of advice to those who may be induced to make the ascent of Monte Rosa. The ascent is one that will amply repay the lover of grand scenery: the view from the summit is equal, or perhaps superior, to that from Mont Blanc. The expense of the expedition is insignificant —it almost sinks to nothing, when compared with the demands for Mont Blanc; and the time occupied is only from fourteen to sixteen hours.

He who attempts the ascent should obtain first-rate guides; should select (if possible) a time when there is a bright morning moon; should wear warm clothing; and should take at least half a bottle of *good* wine, to be drunk just before the last climb of 400 feet; and should previously accustom himself to some of the easier passes and mountains.

E. S. KENNEDY.

ASCENT OF MONTE ROSA

IN 1855.

HAVING passed many days in lesser rambles, and in waiting for really fine weather to attempt the Queen of the Alps, the Revds. C. & G. Smyth, with Messrs. Birkbeck, Stevenson, and myself finally decided to start upon the 31st of July.

Unfortunately Messrs. Kennedy and Ainslie were hors de combat, as, during the ascent of the Breithorn thirty-six hours previously, their eyes and eyelids had suffered from the fine particles of ice and snow blown about, and were now in a very painful state. It was about 1 A.M. when the party sallied forth from the Hotel on the Ryffelberg, accompanied by Ulrich Lauener, of Lauterbrunnen, and by three other guides from the neighbourhood of Zermatt.

It was a glorious bright moonlight night, and the splendid glaciers of the Breithorn and

Lyskamm were seen to great advantage on the right, as we quietly mounted the slopes leading to the Riffel Horn, and then descended to the great Gorner ice stream which flows from the foot of the Monte Rosa chain.

The route adopted by Kennedy in his two ascents, and by E., G. and C. Smyth in theirs, in 1854, was followed on the present occasion, until the caravan had attained a height of 14,000 feet, and stood upon what may be called the Grand Plateau.

From this point there are two courses, the one leading between the Nordend and the Höchste Spitze, and invariably adopted by the guides; the other leading directly up the western face of the Höchste Spitze. No one who had pursued the former route had got nearer than 16 feet of the actual summit, and up to this time the latter direction had been totally unattempted: some, however, if not all, of our present party had resolved to strike out a new path by scaling the western face; and to insure the adoption of our wishes C. Smyth and I went ahead, without even halting to discuss the question with the guides. This move had the desired effect, for the guides

followed mechanically without offering any objection to the abandonment of the old route. Soon after this we arrived at the foot of a steep and somewhat narrow ridge of snow, when Lauener went forward, and did good service with the hatchet in cutting steps, by means of which the rest of the party easily mounted. One of Birkbeck's guides began to look rather the worse for the cold in this exposed place, and he was therefore desired to descend, lest any harm should happen to him during the ascent. At the summit of this slope the party halted under the rocks, and some who were suffering severe pain from the cold had their hands and feet rubbed with snow by their less sensitive companions. At the end of an hour the band once more set forwards, and after mounting a longer and steeper incline of hard snow by means of steps cut in it, they arrived at a narrow and broken ridge of rocks, which led to the highest point of the Höchste Spitze. It was necessary to have a good head and sure foot in order to traverse this last ridge with ease and comfort, for many of the blocks were moveable and partly covered with snow, and the sides, to a

depth of several hundred feet, were very precipitous. All of our party who had already, or have since, ascended Mont Blanc consider Monte Rosa by far the more difficult mountain of the two, though it requires much less time. Christopher Smyth and I made a few observations with the theodolite, brought by the former, and then joined our companions to gaze on the wondrous panorama extended at our feet; but regarding its perhaps unequalled beauties I will be silent, for these have already been described by Kennedy.

The following further particulars, however, regarding this magnificent range will, perhaps, prove not wholly without interest. The name has been fancifully derived by some from the position and form of its five loftiest peaks, which in some degree resemble the petals of the wild rose. Albert Schott, in "Die Deutschen Colonien in Piemont," considers the word to be of German derivation, and identifies it with the Celtic word "Ros," a headland or promontory. Alpine travellers, however, who like ourselves have breathed on the Ryffel heights the fresh air of early morn, do not hesitate to ascribe its name to the lovely

roseate tinge in which sunrise bathes the highest peaks. The name of Monte Silvio, by which it was known to the ancients, is now only applied by the Italians to the towering obelisk of rock more generally known as the Matterhorn. The first attempts to explore these regions were made from the Italian side. Vincent in 1819, Zumstein in 1821, and Ludwig von Welden in 1823, successively reached the points which bear their names. The Signal Kuppe was ascended by the Curé of Alagna, in the Val Sesia, in 1836, but up to this date, and for some time afterwards, the highest point was considered inaccessible.

In the year 1850 the two brothers Schlagenweit, under the guidance of Matthias zum Tauchwald, who had been one of Studer's guides, gained the Höchste Spitze, and were the first who took accurate horometrical observations on the mountain. They afterwards published their excellent work upon the geography and natural history of this portion of the Alps, and from it some of these remarks have been extracted. It was, however, reserved for our party to be the first who should gain the highest point of the principal

summit, a point about 18 ft. higher than the highest peak previously attained.

Table of Heights of the Nine Peaks.

	French Feet.
Höchste Spitze	14,284
Nord End	14,153
Zumstein Spitze	14,064
Signal Kuppe	14,044
Parrot's Spitze	13,668
Ludwig's Höhe	13,350
Schwartz Horn	13,222
Balmen Horn	13,070
Vincent Pyramid	13,003

It will be seen that there is a very slight difference between the heights of the loftiest peaks of Monte Rosa, unlike the summit of Mont Blanc, which rises without a rival far above all neighbours.

CHARLES HUDSON.

NOTES.

GUIDE SYSTEM.

THE following extracts from Mr. Eustace Anderson's book, "Chamouni and Mont Blanc," are illustrative of the guide-system. Mr. Anderson writes thus:—

"After breakfast I went with Mr. Templer to the chief guide, and demanded guides for the ascent of Mont Blanc. He called over the names of eight who ranged themselves for our inspection, when we ascertained that only two had been to the summit, and remonstrated, pointing out that we ought to have at least four who had been there, but all to no purpose. We then said we should like to take two more experienced guides, and requested to be allowed to engage Victor and Jean Tairraz. No! this could not be allowed; if we wanted more guides, we must take them as they came on the roll; which we declined doing. . . . . We found, upon inquiry, that the penalty upon a guide for disobeying the rules was a fine or two days' imprisonment; and as we promised to pay any fine that might be imposed, Victor said he would run the risk of imprisonment. "If," said he, "I was imprisoned for being a thief, I might be ashamed, but I do not think it any shame to be imprisoned for going up Mont Blanc, and I

will go with you, gentlemen." We assured him we would, if possible, go to prison with him; at any rate, that we would escort him out of the village, and also make a friendly call and have a bottle of wine with him; and this important point being settled, we agreed to take Victor, his brother Jean, and eight more guides, which we considered sufficient. . . . . Victor was after our departure fined twenty-five francs, in addition to which he had to pay twenty-five francs' expenses.

"Since my return to England an eminent geologist related to me, that whilst exploring the mountain near Chamouni last autumn, he wished to employ an old man, formerly on the roll of guides, who was himself a collector of fossils and minerals, knew every spot where they were to be found, and must therefore prove an invaluable companion to assist in any researches he wished to make; but that he was compelled to employ a guide on the roll who knew nothing about the matter, and was not even allowed to take the old man in addition, unless upon the understanding that he was not to pay him any thing! Such regulations are so absurd as scarcely to require comment."

SECOND ASCENT FROM ST. GERVAIS.

In a letter received from one of these gentlemen after our return to England, the following passages occur:—

"Chalets of Breuil,
"Sept. 2nd, 1855.

"My dear Mr. K.

"....I take this opportunity of informing you of my successful ascent of Mont Blanc from St. Gervais on Friday and Saturday, the 24th and 25th of August.

"On the morning of our leaving Geneva, Mr. Hudson presented us with a guide, a chamois hunter of the name of Octenier, who had been on the summit five times. He was a first-rate fellow, and could be trusted with any thing, even our lives. On Thursday we took a practice walk of about twelve hours with him, across the glacier de Bionassay and some of the hills; and finding we got on better than we expected, we determined to start for Mont Blanc the following morning from Mont Joli Hotel, St. Gervais. We left at 8 A. M. with three guides and five porters, carrying all our provisions. The walk to the Pavilion was very fatiguing, as the sun was desperately hot, and my friend Mr. Darley in consequence got a very severe headache, which detained us for a short time at the Pavilion. But he soon got better, and we started off again, and arrived at your sleeping place at six o'clock; there he got ill again, and said it would be better for me to go on without him; so with much regret I left him, and proceeded up the mountain with two guides and three porters, having left one guide with Mr. Darley, and a porter; another porter descended.

"I reached about three-fourths way up the Aiguille du Goutè, when it became too dark for us to go any

further; so we turned in under a projecting rock for the night, levelled our bed, and built a small wall round us to prevent us from rolling down the cliff in our sleep. We packed ourselves very closely to keep the heat among us, which was rather difficult, as the thermometer was below freezing and nothing but a blanket over us.

"We started next morning at 4.30, and reached the Grand Plateau at 8.0, and the summit of Mont Blanc at twelve at noon. The ascent was a little more difficult than usual, the snow being very soft, and we sank nearly to our knees at every step. We had a beautiful view of all the Alps, but could not see Italy, as there was a very peculiar dark blue colour in the sky over it, which is very bad for viewing distant objects.

"After remaining about a quarter of an hour on the top, which I did without finding the slightest difficulty of breathing, we descended on to the Grand Plateau very fast, but not *en glissade*, as the snow would not allow us. We then commenced, in my opinion, the most difficult part of the journey, the ascension of the Dome du Gouté, and to increase the unpleasantness of it, I got very sleepy, so would have given any thing to have slept there, but would not be allowed, of course. We reached the Pavilion (where we slept for the night) at 11 P. M., having walked about eighteen hours that day.

"We gave our chief guide Octenier fifty francs, the others different sums under that, which we left to him to arrange. It cost us each about 4*l.*, which

appears to me very little, and the ascent well worth the money.

"I made some observations with a common centigrade thermometer, which M. Rosset lent me. They can only be regarded approximately, but even so may be interesting to you.

"Very truly yours,

"ROBERT REEVES."

Table of Temperature: Fahrenheit Scale.

		Noon.	Sun.	Shade.
Aug. 24.	Pavilion - - -	12.0 P. M.	96⅘°	66⅕°
—	After two hours' walk -	3.0	-	47
—	Cabin on Tête Rouge -	5.30	-	52½
—	My sleeping place on Aiguille du Gouté - -	9.0 A. M.	-	41¾
Aug. 25.	„ „ -	4.30	-	33
—	Dome du Gouté - -	7.0	-	28½
—	Grand Plateau - -	8.0	-	38
—	Col des Monts Maudits -	10.0	37	
—	Summit of Mont Blanc -	12.0	28	

THE END.

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